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THE CHILD WIFE:

A Tale of the Two Worlds.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF "THE SCALP HUNTERS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



WARD, LOCK, & TYLER,

WARWICK HOUSE,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1868.

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THE CHILD WIFE.



CHAPTER I.

PATRON AND PROTÉGÉ.

THE ringing of the bell did not cause Mr. Swinton to start. It might have done so had he been longer in his new residence. His paper "kites" were still carried about London, with judgments pinned on to them ; and he might have supposed that the bearer of one of them was bringing it home to him.

But the short time he had been installed in the M'Tavish villa, with the fact that a visitor was expected, rendered him compara-

tively fearless ; and his composure was only disturbed by a doubt, as to whether the ringer of the bell was his patron, or only a deputy sent with the promised instructions.

The maid-of-all-work, that day hastily engaged, was despatched to answer the ring. If it was an elderly gentleman, tall and stoutish, she was to show him in at once, and without parley.

On opening the gate, a figure was distinguished outside. It was that of a gentleman. He was enveloped in an ample cloak, with a cap drawn over his ears. This did not prevent the servant from seeing that he was tall and stoutish ; while the gleam of the hall lamp, falling on his face, despite a dyed whisker, showed him to answer the other condition for admittance.

“ Mr. Swinton lives here ? ” he asked, before the gate-opener could give him invitation to enter.

“He does, sir. Please to walk in.”

Guided by the girl, the cloaked personage threaded through the lilacs and laurestinias; stepped on to the little piazza, on which Mr. M'Tavish had oft smoked his pipe; and was at length shown into the apartment where Swinton awaited him.

The latter was alone—his wife having retired by instructions.

On the entrance of his visitor, Mr. Swinton started up from his seat, and advanced to receive him.

“My lord!” said he, shamming a profound surprise, “is it possible I am honoured by your presence?”

“No honour, sir; no honour whatever.”

“From what your lordship said, I was expecting you to send——”

“I have come instead, Mr. Swinton. The instructions I have to give are upon a matter of some importance. I think it better you

should have them direct from myself. For this reason I present myself, as you see, in *propria persona*."

"That's a lie!" thought Swinton, in reference to the reason.

Of course he kept the thought to himself. His reply was:

"Just like what is said of your lordship. By night, as by day, always at work—doing service to the State. Your lordship will pardon me for speaking so freely?"

"Don't mention it, my dear sir. The business between us requires that we both speak freely."

"Excuse me for not having asked your lordship to take a seat!"

"I'll take that," promptly responded the condescending nobleman, "and a cigar, too, if you've got one to spare."

"Fortunately I have," said the delighted Swinton. "Here, my lord, are some sold to

me for Havanas. I can't answer for their quality."

"Try one of mine!"

The patron pulled a cigar-case out of the pocket of his coat. The cloak and cap had been left behind him in the hall.

The protégé accepted it with a profusion of thanks.

Both sat down, and commenced smoking.

Swinton, thinking he had talked enough, waited for the great man to continue the conversation.

He did so.

"I see you've succeeded in taking the house," was the somewhat pointless remark.

"I am in it, my lord," was the equally pointless reply.

More to the purpose was the explanation that followed :

"I regret to inform your lordship that it has cost a considerable sum."

.

“How much?”

“I had to take it for a whole year—at a rent of two hundred pounds.”

“Pooh! never mind that. It’s for the service of the State. In such matters we are obliged to make liberal disbursement. And now, my dear sir, let me explain to you why it has been taken, and for what purpose you have been placed in it.”

Swinton settled down into an attitude of obsequious attention.

His patron proceeded:

“Directly opposite lives a man, whose name is already known to you.”

Without the name being mentioned, the listener nodded assent. He knew it was Kossuth.

“You will observe, ere long, that this man has many visitors.”

“I have noticed that already, my lord. All day they have been coming and going.”

“Just so. And among them are men of note; many who have played an important part in the politics of Europe. Now, sir; it is deemed convenient, *for the cause of order*, that the movements of these men should be known; and for this it is necessary that a watch be kept upon them. From Sir Robert Cottrell’s recommendation, we’ve chosen you for this delicate duty. If I mistake not, sir, you will know how to perform it?”

“My lord, I make promise to do my best.”

“So much then for the general purpose. And now to enter a little more into details.”

Swinton resumed his listening attitude.

“You will make yourself acquainted with the personal appearance of all who enter the opposite house; endeavour to ascertain who they are; and report on their goings and comings—taking note of the hour. For this purpose you will require two assistants;

whom I authorize you to engage. One of them may appear to act as your servant; the other, appropriately dressed, should visit you as an intimate acquaintance. If you could find one who has access to the camp of the enemy, it would be of infinite importance. There are some of these refugees in the habit of visiting your neighbour, who may not be altogether his friends. You understand me?"

"I do, your lordship."

"I see, Mr. Swinton, you are the man we want. And now for a last word. Though you are to take note of the movements of Kossuth's guests, still more must you keep your eye upon himself. Should he go out, either you or your friend must follow and find where he goes to. Take a cab if necessary; and on any such occasion report *directly and without losing time*. Make your report to my private secretary; who will always be

found at my residence in Park Lane. This will be sufficient for the present. When you are in need of funds, let my secretary know. He has orders to attend to the supply department. Any further instructions I shall communicate to you myself. I may have to come here frequently ; so you had better instruct your servant about admitting me."

"My lord, would you accept of a key? Excuse me for asking. It would save your lordship from the disagreeable necessity of waiting outside the gate, and perhaps being recognized by the passers, or those opposite?"

Without showing it, Swinton's patron was charmed with the proposal. The key might in time become useful, for other purposes than to escape recognition by either "the passers or those opposite."

He signified his consent to accept it.

"I see you are clever, Mr. Swinton," he

said, with a peculiar, almost sardonic smile. "As you say, a key will be convenient. And now, I need scarce point out to you the necessity of discretion in all that you do. I perceive that your windows are furnished with moveable Venetians. That is well, and will be suitable to your purpose. Fortunately your own personal appearance corresponds very well to such an establishment as this—a very snug affair it is—and your good lady—ah! by the way, we are treating her very impolitely. I owe her an apology for keeping you so long away from her. I hope you will make it for me, Mr. Swinton. Tell her that I've detained you on business of importance."

"My lord, she will not believe it, unless I tell her whom I've had the honour of receiving. May I take that liberty?"

"Oh! certainly—certainly. Were it not for the hour, I should have asked you to

introduce me. Of course, it is too late to intrude upon a lady."

"There's no hour too late for an introduction to your lordship. I know the poor child would be delighted."

"Well, Mr. Swinton, if it's not interfering with your domestic arrangements, I, too, would be delighted. All hours are alike to me."

"My wife is upstairs. May I ask her to come down?"

"Nay, Mr. Swinton; may I ask you to bring her down?"

"Such condescension, my lord! It is a pleasure to obey you."

With this speech, half aside, Swinton stepped out of the room; and commenced ascending the stairway.

He was not gone long. Fan was found upon the first landing, ready to receive the summons.

He returned almost too soon for his sexagenarian visitor; who had placed himself in front of the mantel mirror, and was endeavouring with dyed locks to conceal the bald spot upon his crown!

The introduction was followed by Mr. Swinton's guest forgetting all about the lateness of the hour, and resuming his seat. Then succeeded a triangular conversation, obsequious on two sides, slightly patronizing on the third; becoming less so, as the speeches were continued; and then there was an invitation extended to the noble guest to accept of some refreshment, on the plea of his long detention—a courtesy he did not decline.

And the Abigail was despatched to the nearest confectionary, and brought back sausage rolls and sandwiches, with a Melton Mowbray pie; and these were placed upon the table, alongside a decanter of sherry; of

which his lordship partook with as much amiable freedom as if he had been a jolly guardsman!

And it ended in his becoming still more amiable; and talking to Swinton as to an old bosom friend; and squeezing the hand of Swinton's wife, as he stood in the doorway, repeatedly bidding her "good-night"—a bit of bye-play that should have made Swinton jealous, had the hall-lamp been burning bright enough for him to see. He only guessed it, and was not jealous!

"She's a delicious creature, that!" soliloquized the titled *roué*, as he proceeded to the Park Road, where a carriage, drawn up under the shadow of the trees, had been all the while waiting for him. "And a trump to boot! I can tell that by the touch of her taper fingers."

"She's a trump and a treasure!" was the almost simultaneous reflection of Swinton,

with the same woman in his thoughts—his own wife!

He made it, after closing the door upon his departing guest; and then, as he sat gulping another glass of sherry, and smoking another cigar, he repeated it with the continuation:

“Yes; Fan’s the correct card to play. What a stupid I’ve been not to think of this before! Hang it! it’s not yet too late. I’ve still got hold of the hand; and this night, if I’m not mistaken, there’s a game begun that’ll give me all I want in this world—that’s Julia Girdwood.”

The serious tone, in which the last three words were spoken, told he had not yet resigned his aspirations after the American heiress.

CHAPTER II.

IMPROVED PROSPECTS.

To those who take no note of social distinctions, Swinton's scheme in relation to Julia Girdwood will appear grotesque. Not so much on account of its atrocity; but from the chances of its success seeming so problematical.

Could he have got the girl to love him, it would have changed the aspect of affairs. Love breaks down all barriers; and to a mind constituted as hers, no obstacle could have intervened—not even the idea of danger.

She did not love him; but he did not know it. A guardsman, and handsome to

boot, he had been accustomed to facile conquests. In his own way of thinking, the time had not arrived when these should be deemed difficult.

He was no longer in the Guards; but he was still young, and he knew he was still handsome. English dames thought him so. Strange if a Yankee girl should have a different opinion!

This was the argument on his side; and trusting to his attractions, he still fancied himself pretty sure of being able to make a conquest of the American—even to making her the victim of an illegal marriage.

And if he should succeed in his bigamous scheme, what then? What use would she be as a wife, unless her mother should keep that promise he had overheard: to endow her with the moiety of her own life-interest in the estate of the deceased store-keeper?

To marry Julia Girdwood against her mother's wish would be a simple absurdity. He did not dread the danger that might accrue from the crime. He did not think of it. But to become son-in-law to a woman, whose daughter might remain penniless as long as she herself lived, would be a poor speculation. A woman, too, who talked of living another half-century !

The jest was not without significance ; and Swinton thought so.

He felt confident that he could dupe the daughter into marrying him ; but to get that half million out of the mother, he must stand before the altar as a *lord* !

These were Mrs. Girdwood's original conditions. He knew she still adhered to them. If fulfilled, she would still consent ; but not otherwise.

To go on, then, the sham *incognito* must be continued—the deception kept up.

But how ?

This was the point that puzzled him.

The impersonation had become difficult. In Newport and New York it had been easy ; in Paris still easier ; but he was at length in London, where such a cheat would be in danger of being detected.

Moreover, in his last interview with the ladies, he had been sensible of some change in their behaviour toward him—an absence of the early congeniality. It was shown chiefly by Mrs. Girdwood herself. Her warm friendship suddenly conceived at Newport, continued in New York, and afterwards renewed in Paris, appeared to have as suddenly grown cool.

What could be the cause ? Had she heard anything to his discredit ? Could she have discovered the counterfeit ? Or was she only suspicious of it ?

Only the last question troubled him. He

did not think he had been found out. He had played his part skilfully ; having given no clue to his concealed title. And he had given good reasons for his care in concealing it.

He admitted to himself that she had cause for being suspicious. She had extended hospitality to him in America. He had not returned it in Europe, for reasons well-known.

True, he had only met his American acquaintances in Paris ; but even there, an English lord should have shown himself more liberal ; and she might have felt piqued at his parsimony.

For similar reasons he had not yet called upon them in London.

On the contrary, since his return, he had purposely kept out of their way.

In England he was in his own country ; and why should he be living under an assumed

name? If a lord, why under straitened circumstances? In Mrs. Girdwood's eyes these would be suspicious circumstances.

The last might be explained: by the fact of there being poor lords, though not many. Not many, who do not find the means to dress well, and dine sumptuously—to keep a handsome house, if they feel disposed.

Since his return from the States, Swinton could do none of these things. How, then, was he to pass himself off for a lord—even one of the poorest?

He had almost despaired of being able to continue the counterfeit; when the patronage of a lord, real and powerful, inspired him with fresh hope. Through it his prospects had become entirely changed. It had put money in his purse, and promised more. What was equally encouraging, he could now, in real truth, claim being employed in a diplomatic capacity. True, it was but as a *spy*; but this

is an essential part of the diplomatic service!

There was his apparent intimacy with a distinguished diplomatic character—a nobleman; there would be his constant visits to the grand mansion in Park Lane—strange if with these appearances in his favour he could not still contrive to throw dust in the eyes of Dame Girdwood!

Certainly his scheme was far from hopeless. By the new appointment a long vista of advantages had been suddenly disclosed to him; and he now set himself to devise the best plan for improving them.

Fan was called into his counsels; for the wife was still willing. Less than ever did she care for him, or what he might do. She, too, had become conscious of brighter prospects; and might hope, at no distant day, to appear once more in Rotten Row, in her part of “pretty horsebreaker.”

If, otherwise, she had a poor opinion of her husband, she did not despise his talent for intrigue. There was proof of it in their changed circumstances. And though she well knew the source from which their sudden prosperity had sprung, she knew, also, the advantage, to a woman of her propensities, in being a *wife*. "United we stand, divided we fall," may have been the thought in her mind; but, whether it was or not, she was still ready to assist her husband in accomplishing a second marriage!

With the certificate of the first, carefully stowed away in a secret drawer of her dressing-case, she had nothing to fear; beyond the chance of a problematical exposure.

She did not fear this, so long as there was a prospect of that splendid plunder, in which she would be a sharer. Dick had promised to be "true as steel," and she had reciprocated the promise.



With a box of cigars, and a decanter of sherry between them, a programme was traced out for the further prosecution of the scheme.

CHAPTER III.

A DISTINGUISHED DINNER-PARTY.

It was a chill November night; but there was no coldness inside the South Bank Cottage—the one occupied by Mr. Richard Swinton.

There was company in it.

There had been a dinner-party, of nine covers. The dinner was eaten; and the diners had returned to the drawing-room.

The odd number of nine precluded an exact pairing of the sexes. The ladies out-counted the gentlemen, by five to four.

Four of them are already known to the

reader. They were Mrs. Swinton, Mrs. Girdwood, her daughter and niece. The fifth was a stranger, not only to the reader, but to Mrs. Girdwood and her girls.

Three of the gentlemen were the host himself, Mr. Louis Lucas, and his friend Mr. Spiller. The fourth, like the odd lady, was a stranger.

He did not appear strange to Mrs. Swinton; who during the dinner had treated him with remarkable familiarity, calling him her "dear Gustave;" while he in turn let the company know she was his *wife*!

He spoke with a French accent, and by Swinton was styled "the Count."

The strange lady appeared to know him—also in a familiar way. She was the Honourable Miss Courtney — Geraldine Courtney.

With such a high-sounding name, she could not look other than aristocratic.

She was pretty, as well, and accomplished; with just that dash of freedom, in speech and in manner, which distinguishes the lady of *haut ton* from the wife or daughter of a "tradesman."

In Miss Courtney it was carried to a slight excess. So a prudish person might have thought.

But Mrs. Girdwood was not prudish—least of all, in the presence of such people. She was delighted with the Honourable Geraldine; and wondered not at her wild way—only at her amiable condescensions!

She was charmed also with the count, and his beautiful countess.

His lordship had done the correct thing at last—by introducing her to such company. Though still passing under the assumed name of Swinton—even among his own friends—the invitation to that dinner-party disarmed her of suspicion. The dinner itself still

more ; and she no longer sought to penetrate the mystery of his *incognito*.

Besides, he had repeated the plea that hitherto satisfied her. Still was it diplomacy !

Even Julia was less distant with him. A house handsomely furnished ; a table profusely spread ; titled guests around it ; well-dressed servants in waiting—all this proved that Mr. Swinton was somebody. And it was only his temporary town residence, taken for a time and a purpose—still diplomacy. She had not yet seen his splendid place in the country, to which he had given hints of an invitation.

Proud republican as Julia Girdwood was, she was still but the child of a *parvenu*.

And there was something in the surroundings to affect her fancy. She saw this man, Mr. Swinton, whom she had hitherto treated slightly, now in the midst of his own

friends, behaving handsomely, and treated with respect. Such friends, too! all bearing titles—all accomplished—two of them beautiful women, who appeared not only intimate with, but complaisant toward him!

Moreover, no one could fail to see that he was handsome. He had never looked better, in her eyes, than on that evening. It was a situation not only to stir curiosity, but suggest thoughts of rivalry!

And perhaps Julia Girdwood had them. It was the first time she had figured in the company of titled aristocracy. It would not be strange if her fancy was affected in such presence. Higher pride than hers has succumbed to its influence.

She was not the only one of her party who gave way to the wayward influences of the hour, and the seductions of their charming host. Mr. Lucas, inspired by repeated draughts of sherry and champagne, forgot his

past antipathies, and of course burned to embrace him. Mr. Lucas's shadow, Spiller, was willing to do the same!

Perhaps the only one of Mrs. Girdwood's set who preserved independence, was the daughter of the Poughkeepsie shopkeeper. In her quiet, unpretending way Cornelia showed dignity far superior to that of her own friends, or even the grand people to whom they had been presented.

But even she had no suspicion of the shams that surrounded her. No more than her aunt Girdwood, did she dream, that Mr. Swinton was Mr. Swinton; that the countess was his wife; that the count was an impostor—like Swinton himself, playing a part; and that the Honourable Geraldine was a lady of Mrs. Swinton's acquaintance, alike accomplished and equally well-known in the circles of St. John's Wood, under the less aristocratic cognomen of "Kate the copier."

Belonging to the sisterhood of "pretty horse-breakers," she had earned this soubriquet by exhibiting superior skill in disposing of her cast steeds!

Utterly ignorant of the game that was being played, as of the players, Mrs. Girdwood spent the evening in a state approaching to supreme delight. Mr. Swinton, ever by her side, took the utmost pains to cancel the debt of hospitality long due; and he succeeded in cancelling it.

If she could have had any suspicion of his dishonesty, it would have been dispelled by an incident that occurred during the course of the evening.

As it was an episode interrupting the entertainment, we shall be excused for describing it.

The guests in the drawing-room were taking tea and coffee, carried round to them by the servants—a staff hired from a fashionable

confectionary—when the gate-bell jingled under the touch of a hand that appeared used to the pulling of it.

“I can tell that ring,” said Swinton, speaking loud enough for his guests to hear him. “I’ll lay a wager it’s Lord ——.”

“Lord ——!”

The name was that of a distinguished nobleman—more distinguished still as a great statesman! Swinton’s proclaiming it caused his company a thrill—the strangers looking incredulous.

They had scarce time to question him before a servant, entering the room, communicated something in a whisper.

“His lordship is it?” said the master, in a muttered tone, just loud enough to reach the ear of Mrs. Girdwood. “Show him into the front parlour. Say I shall be down in a second. Ladies and gentlemen!” he continued, turning to his guests, “will yaw

excuse me faw one moment—only a moment? I have a visitor who cannot well be denied.”

They excused him, of ‘course; and for a time he was gone out of the room.

And of course his guests were curious to know who was the visitor, who “could not well be denied.”

On his return they questioned him; the “countess,” with an imperative earnestness that called for an answer.

“Well, ladies and gentlemen,” said their amiable entertainer, “if yaw insist upon knowing who has been making this vewry ill-timed call upon me, I suppose I must satisfy yaw kewyosity. I was wight in my conjectyaw. It was Lord ——. His lawdship simply dwopped in upon a matter of diplomatic business.”

“Oh! it was Lord ——!” exclaimed the Honourable Geraldine. “Why didn’t you

ask him in here? He's a dear old fellow, as I know; and I'm sure he would have come. Mr. Swinton! I'm very angry with you!"

"'Pon honaw! Miss Courtney, I'm vewy sorry; I didn't think of it, else I should have been most happy."

"He's gone, I suppose?"

"Aw, yas. He went away as soon as he undawstood I had company."

And this was true—all true. The nobleman in question had really been in the front parlour, and had gone off on learning what was passing upstairs in the drawing-room.

He had parted, too, with a feeling of disappointment, almost chagrin; though it was not diplomatic business to which the villa was indebted for his visit.

However fruitless his calling had proved to him, it was not without advantage to Mr. Swinton.

"The man who receives midnight visits

from a lord, and that lord a distinguished statesman—must either be a lord himself, *or a somebody!*”

This was said in soliloquy by the retail storekeeper’s widow, as that night she stretched herself upon one of the luxurious couches of the “Clarendon.”

About the same time, her daughter gave way to a somewhat similar reflection.

CHAPTER IV.

A PARTING PRESENT.

AT parting, there had been no "scene" between Sir George Vernon and his seemingly ungrateful guest.

Nor was the interview a stormy one, as they stood face to face under the shadow of the *deodara*.

Sir George's daughter had retired from the spot, her young heart throbbing with pain ; while Maynard, deeply humiliated, made no attempt to justify himself.

Had there been light under the tree, Sir George would have seen before him the face of a man that expressed the very type of submission.

For some seconds, there was a profound and painful silence.

It was broken by the baronet :

“ After this, sir, I presume it is not necessary for me to point out the course you should pursue ? There is only one.”

“ I am aware of it, Sir George.”

“ Nor is it necessary to say, that I wish to avoid scandal ?”

Maynard made no reply ; though, unseen, he nodded assent to the proposition.

“ You can retire at your leisure, sir ; but in ten minutes my carriage will be ready to take you and your luggage to the station.”

It was terrible to be thus talked to ; and but for the scandal Sir George had alluded to, Maynard would have replied to it by refusing the proffered service.

But he felt himself in a dilemma. The railway station was full five miles distant.

A fly might be had there ; but not without some one going to fetch it. For this he must be indebted to his host. He was in a dress suit, and could not well walk, without courting the notice to be shunned. Besides, there would be his luggage to come after him.

There was no alternative, but accept the obligation.

He did so, by saying—

“ In ten minutes, Sir George, I shall be ready. I make no apology for what has passed. I only hope the time may come, when you will look less severely on my conduct.”

“ Not likely,” was the dry response of the baronet, and with these words the two parted : Sir George going back to his guests in the drawing-room, Maynard making his way to the apartment that contained his *impedimenta*.

The packing of his portmanteau did not

occupy him half the ten minutes' time. There was no need to change his dancing-dress. His surtout would sufficiently conceal it.

The bell brought a male domestic; who, shouldering the "trap," carried it downstairs—though not without wondering why the gent should be taking his departure, at that absurd hour: just as the enjoyment in the drawing-room had reached its height, and a splendid supper was being spread upon the tables!

Maynard having given a last look around the room, to assure himself that nothing had been overlooked, was about preparing to follow the bearer of his portmanteau, when another *attaché* of the establishment barred his passage on the landing of the stair.

It was also a domestic, but of different kind, sex and colour.

It was Sabina, of Badian birth.

"Hush! Mass Maynard," she said, placing

her finger on her lips to impress the necessity of silence. "Doan you 'peak above de breff, an I tell you someting dat you like hear."

"What is it?" Maynard asked, mechanically.

"Dat Missy Blanche lub you dearly—wit all de lub ob her young heart. She Sabby tell so—yesserday—dis day—more'n a dozen times, oba an oba. So dar am no need you go into despair."

"Is that all you have to say?" asked he, though without any asperity of tone.

It would have been strange if such talk had not given him pleasure, despite the little information conveyed by it.

"All Sabby hab say; but not all she got do."

"What have you to do?" demanded Maynard, in an anxious undertone.

"You gib dis," was the reply of the mulatto, as, with the adroitness peculiar to

her race and sex, she slipped something white into the pocket of his surtout.

The carriage wheels were heard outside the hall-door, gritting upon the gravel.

Without danger of being observed, the departing guest could not stay in such company any longer ; and passing a half-sovereign into Sabby's hand, he silently descended the stair, and as silently took seat in the carriage.

The bearer of the portmanteau, as he shut to the carriage door, could not help still wondering at such an ill-timed departure.

" Not a bad sort of gent, anyhow," was his reflection, as he turned back under the hall-lamp to examine the half-sovereign that had been slipped into his palm.

And while he was doing this, the gent in question was engaged in a far more interesting scrutiny. Long before the carriage had passed out of the park—even while it was yet winding round the "sweep," its occupant had

plunged his hand into the pocket of his sur-tout and drawn out the paper that had been there so surreptitiously deposited.

It was but a tiny slip—a half-sheet torn from its crested counterfoil. And the writing upon it was in pencil; only a few words, as if scrawled in trembling haste!

The light of the wax-candles, reflected from the silvered lamps, rendered the reading easy; and with a heart surcharged with supreme joy, he read:—

“ Papa is very angry; and I know he will never sanction my seeing you again. I am sad to think we may meet no more; and that you will forget me. I shall never forget you—never!”

“ Nor *I you*, Blanche Vernon,” was the reflection of Maynard, as he refolded the slip of paper, and thrust it back into the pocket of his coat.

He took it out, and re-read it before reaching the railway station; and once again, by

the light of a suspended lamp, as he sate solitary in a carriage of the night mail train, up for the metropolis.

Then folding it more carefully, he slipped it into his card-case, to be placed in a pocket nearer his heart; if not the first, the sweetest *gage d'amour* he had ever received in his life!

CHAPTER V.

AN INFORMER.

THE disappearance of a dancing guest from the midst of three-score others is a thing not likely to be noticed. And if noticed, needing no explanation — in English “best society.”

There the defection may occur from a quiet dinner-party—even in a country-house, where arrivals and departures are more rare than in the grand *roues* of the town.

True politeness has long since discarded that insufferable ceremony of general leave-taking, with its stiff bows and stiffer hand-shakings. Sufficient to salute your host—

more particularly your hostess—and bow good-bye to any of the olive branches that may be met, as you elbow your way out of the drawing-room.

This was the rule holding good under the roof of Sir George Vernon ; and the abrupt departure of Captain Maynard would have escaped comment, but for one or two circumstances of a peculiar nature.

He was a stranger to Sir George's company, with romantic, if not mysterious, antecedents ; while his literary laurels freshly gained, and still green upon his brow, had attracted attention even in that high circle.

But what was deemed undoubtedly peculiar was the mode in which he had made departure. He had been seen dancing with Sir George's daughter, and afterward stepping outside with her—through the conservatory, and into the grounds. He had not again returned.

Some of the dancers who chanced to be cooling themselves by the bottom of the stair, had seen his portmanteau taken out, himself following shortly after ; while the sound of carriage wheels upon the sweep told of his having gone off for good !

There was not much in all this. He had probably taken leave of his host outside—in a correct ceremonial manner.

But no one had seen him do so ; and, as he had been for some time staying at the house, the departure looked somewhat brusque. For certain it was strangely-timed.

Still it might not have been remarked upon, but for another circumstance : that, after he was gone, the baronet's daughter appeared no more among the dancers.

She had not been seen since she had stood up in the *valse*, where she and her partner had been so closely scrutinized !

She was but a young thing. The spin may

have affected her to giddiness ; and she had retired to rest awhile.

This was the reasoning of those who chanced to think of it.

They were not many. The charmers in wide skirts had enough to do thinking of themselves ; the dowagers had betaken themselves to quiet whist in the antechambers ; and the absence of Blanche Vernon brought no blight upon the general enjoyment.

But the absence of her father did—that is, his absence of mind. During the rest of the evening there was a strangeness in Sir George's manner noticed by many of his guests ; an abstraction, palpably, almost painfully observable. Even his good breeding was not proof against the blow he had sustained !

Despite his efforts to conceal it, his more intimate acquaintances could see that something had gone astray.

Its effect was to put a damper on the night's hilarity; and perhaps earlier than would have otherwise happened were the impatient coachmen outside released from their chill waiting upon the sweep.

And earlier, also, did the guests staying at the house retire to their separate sleeping apartments.

Sir George did not go direct to his: but first to his library.

He went not alone. Frank Scudamore accompanied him.

He did so, at the request of his uncle, after the others had said good-night.

The object of this late interview between Sir George and his nephew is made known, by the conversation that occurred between them.

"Frank," began the baronet, "I desire you to be frank with me."

Sir George said this, without intending a

pun. He was in no mood for playing upon words.

"About what, uncle?" asked Scudamore, looking a little surprised.

"About all you've seen between Blanche and this — fellow."

The "fellow" was pronounced with contemptuous emphasis—almost in a hiss.

"All I've seen?"

"All you've seen, and all you've heard."

"What I've seen and heard I have told you. That is, up to this night—up to an hour ago."

"An hour ago! Do you mean what occurred under the tree?"

"No uncle, not that. I've seen something since."

"Since! Captain Maynard went immediately away!"

"He did. But not without taking a certain thing along with him he ought not to have taken."

"Taken a certain thing along with him !
What do you mean, nephew ?"

"That your honoured guest carried out of
your house a piece of paper upon which
something had been written."

"By whom ?"

"By my cousin Blanche."

"When, and where ?"

"Well, I suppose while he was getting
ready to go ; and as to the where, I presume
it was done by Blanche in her bedroom.
She went there after—what you saw."

Sir George listened to this information
with as much coolness as he could command.
Still, there was a twitching of the facial
muscles, and a pallor overspreading his
cheeks, his nephew could not fail to notice.

"Proceed, Frank !" he said, in a faltering
voice, "go on, and tell me all. How did you
become acquainted with this ?"

"By the merest accident," pursued the

willing informant. "I was outside the drawing-room, resting between two dances. It was just at the time Captain Maynard was going off. From where I was standing, I could see up the stairway to the top landing. He was there talking to Sabina, and as it appeared to me, in a very confidential manner. I saw him slip something into her hand—a piece of money, I suppose—just after she had dropped something white into the pocket of his overcoat. I could tell it was paper—folded in the shape of a note."

"Are you sure it was that?"

"Quite sure, uncle. I had no doubt of it at the time; and said to myself, 'It's a note that's been written by my cousin, who has sent Sabina to give it to him.' I'd have stopped him on the stair and made him give it up again, but for raising a row in the house. You know that would never have done?"

Sir George did not hear the boasting re-

mark. He was not listening to it. His soul was too painfully absorbed—reflecting upon this strange doing of his daughter.

“Poor child!” muttered he in sad soliloquy. “Poor innocent child! And this, after all my care, my ever-zealous guardianship, my far more than ordinary solicitude. Oh God! to think I’ve taken a serpent into my house, who should thus turn and sting me!”

The baronet’s feelings forbade farther conversation; and Scudamore was dismissed to his bed.

CHAPTER VI.

UNSOCIABLE FELLOW-TRAVELLERS.

THE train by which Maynard travelled made stop at the Sydenham Station, to connect with the Crystal Palace.

The stoppage failed to arouse him from the reverie into which he had fallen—painful after what had passed.

He was only made aware of it, on hearing voices outside the carriage, and only because some of these seemed familiar.

On looking out, he saw upon the platform a party of ladies and gentlemen.

The place would account for their being there at so late an hour—excursionists to the

Crystal Palace—but still more, a certain volubility of speech, suggesting the idea of their having dined at the Sydenham Hotel.

They were moving along the platform, in search of a first-class carriage for London.

As there were six of them, an empty one would be required : the London and Brighton line being narrow gauge.

There was no such carriage, and therefore no chance of them getting seated together. The dining party would have to divide.

“What a baw!” exclaimed the gentleman who appeared to act as the leader, “a dooced baw! But I suppose there’s no help for it. Aw—heaw is a cawage with only one in it!”

The speaker had arrived in front of that in which Maynard sate—*solus*, and in a corner.

“Seats for five of us,” pursued he. “We’d

better take this, ladies. One of us fellows must stow elsewhere."

The ladies assenting, he opened the door, and stood holding the handle.

The three ladies—there were three of them—entered first.

It became a question which of the three "fellows" was to be separated from such pleasant travelling-companions—two of them being young and pretty.

"I'll go," volunteered he who appeared the youngest and least consequential of the trio.

The proposal was eagerly accepted by the other two—especially him who held the handle of the door.

By courtesy he was the last to take a seat. He had entered the carriage, and was about doing so; when all at once a thought, or something else, seemed to strike him—causing him to change his design.

"Aw, ladies!" he said, "I hope yaw will pardon me for leaving yaw to go into the smoking cawage. I'm dying for a cigaw."

Perhaps the ladies would have said, "Smoke where you are;" but there was a stranger to be consulted, and they only said :

"Oh, certainly, sir."

If any of them intended an additional observation, before it could have been made, he was gone.

He had shot suddenly out upon the platform, as if something else than smoking was in his mind!

They thought it strange—even a little impolite.

"Mr. Swinton's an inveterate smoker," said the oldest of the three ladies, by way of apologizing for him.

The remark was addressed to the gentleman, who had now sole charge of them.

"Yes ; I see he is," replied the latter, in a tone that sounded slightly ironical.

He had been scanning the solitary passenger, in cap and surtout, who sate silent in the corner.

Despite the dim light, he had recognized him ; and felt sure that Swinton had done the same.

His glance guided that of the ladies ; all of whom had previous acquaintance with their fellow-passenger. One of the three started on discovering who it was.

For all this there was no speech—not even a nod of recognition. Only a movement of surprise, followed by embarrassment.

Luckily the lamp was of oil, making it difficult to read the expression on their faces.

So thought Julia Girdwood ; and so too her mother.

Cornelia cared not. She had no shame to conceal.

But Louis Lucas liked the obscurity : for it was he who was in charge.

He had dropped down upon the seat, opposite to the gentleman who had shot his Newfoundland dog !

It was not a pleasant place ; and he instantly changed to the stall that should have been occupied by Mr. Swinton.

He did this upon pretence of sitting nearer to Mrs. Girdwood.

And thus Maynard was left without a *vis-a-vis*.

His thoughts also were strange. How could they be otherwise ? Beside him, with shoulders almost touching, sate the woman he had once loved ; or, at all events, passionately admired.

It was the passion of a day. It had passed ; and was now cold and dead. There was a time when the touch of that rounded arm would have sent the blood in hot current

through his veins. Now its chafing against his, as they came together on the cushion, produced no more feeling than if it had been a fragment from the chisel of Praxiteles!

Did she feel the same?

He could not tell; nor cared he to know.

If he had a thought about her thoughts, it was one of simple gratitude. He remembered his own imaginings, as to who had sent the star flag to protect him, confirmed by what Blanche Vernon had let drop in that conversation in the covers.

And this alone influenced him to shape, in his own mind, the question "Should I speak to her?"

His thoughts charged back to all that had passed between them—to her cold parting on the cliff where he had rescued her from drowning; to her almost disdainful dismissal of him in the Newport ball-room. But he remembered also her last speech as she

passed him, going out at the ball-room door ; and her last glance given him from the balcony !

Both words and look once more rising into recollection, caused him to repeat the mental interrogatory, "Should I speak to her?"

Ten times there was a speech upon his tongue ; and as often was it restrained.

There was time for that and more ; enough to have admitted of an extended dialogue. Though the mail train, making forty miles an hour, should reach London Bridge in fifteen minutes, it seemed as though it would never arrive at the station !

It did so at length without a word having been exchanged between Captain Maynard and any of his *quondam* acquaintances !

They all seemed relieved, as the platform appearing alongside gave them a chance of escaping from his company !

Julia may have been an exception. She was the last of her party to get out of the carriage, Maynard on the off side, of course, still staying.

She appeared to linger, as with a hope of still being spoken to.

It was upon her tongue to say the word "cruel;" but a proud thought restrained her; and she sprang quickly out of the carriage to spare herself the humiliation!

Equally near speaking was Maynard. He too was restrained by a thought—proud, but not cruel.

* * * * *

He looked along the platform, and watched them as they moved away. He saw them joined by two gentlemen—one who approached stealthily, as if not wishing to be seen.

He knew that the skulker was Swinton; and why he desired to avoid observation.

Maynard no more cared for the movements of this man—no more envied him either their confidence, or company. His only reflection was :

“Strange that in every unpleasant passage of my life this same party should trump up—at Newport; in Paris; and now near London, in the midst of a grief greater than all !”

And he continued to reflect upon this coincidence, till the railway porter had pushed him and his portmanteau into the interior of a cab.

The official not understanding the cause of his abstraction, gave him no credit for it.

By the sharp slamming of the hack-door he was reminded of a remissness: he had neglected the *douceur* !

CHAPTER VII.

“IT IS SWEET—SO SWEET.”

TRANSPORTED in his cab, Captain Maynard was set down safely at his lodgings in the proximity of Portman Square.

A latch-key let him in, without causing disturbance to his landlady.

Though once more in his own rooms, with a couch that seemed to invite him to slumber, he could not sleep. All night long he lay tossing upon it, thinking of Blanche Vernon.

The distraction, caused by his encounter with Julia Girdwood, had lasted no longer than while this lady was by his side in the railway carriage.

At the moment of her disappearance from the platform, back into his thoughts came the baronet's daughter—back before his mental vision the remembrance of her roseate cheeks and golden hair.

The *contretemps* had been disagreeable—a thing to be regretted. Yet, thinking over it, he was not wretched; scarce unhappy. How could he be, with those tender speeches still echoing in his ears—that piece of paper in his possession, which once again he had taken out, and read under the light of his own lamp?

It was painful to think “papa would never sanction her seeing him again.” But this did not hinder him from having a hope.

It was no more the mediæval time; nor is England the country of cloisters, where love, conscious of being returned, lays much stress on the parental sanction. Still might such authority be an obstruction, not to be thought

lightly of; nor did Maynard so think of it.

Between the proud baronet and himself, he had placed a barrier he might never be able to remove—a social gulf that would separate them for ever!

Was there no means of bridging it? Could none be devised?

For long hours these questions kept him awake; and he went to sleep without finding answer to them.

During the same hours was she, too, lying awake—thinking in the same way.

She had other thoughts, and among them fears. She had yet to face her father!

Returning, as she had done to her own room, she had not seen him since the hour of her shame.

But there was a morrow when she would have to meet him—perhaps be called upon for a full confession.

It might seem as if there was nothing more to be told. But the necessity of having to confront her father, and repeat what was already known, would of itself be sufficiently painful.

Besides there was her after action : in the surreptitious penning of that little note. She had done it in haste, yielding to the instinct of love, and while its frenzy was upon her.

Now in the calm quiet of her chamber, when the spasmodic courage of passion had departed, she felt doubtful of what she had done.

It was less repentance of the act, than fear for the consequences. What if her father should also learn that? If he should have a suspicion and ask her?

She knew she must confess. She was as yet too young, too guileless, to think of subterfuge. She had just practised one ; but it was altogether different from the telling of an

untruth. It was a falsehood even prudery itself might deem pardonable.

But her father would not; and she knew it. Angry at what he already knew, it would add to his indignation—perhaps strengthen it to a storm. How would she withstand it?

She lay reflecting in fear.

“ Dear Sabby!” she said, “ do you think he will suspect it?”

The question was to the coloured attendant, who, having a tiny couch in the adjoining antechamber, sate up late by her young mistress to converse with and comfort her.

“ ‘Speck what? And who am to hab de saspicion?”

“ About the note you gave him. My father, I mean.”

“ You fadda! I gub you fadda no note. You wand’in in your ‘peach, Missy Blanche!”

“ No—no. I mean what you gave him—the piece of paper I entrusted you with.”

"Oh, gub Massa Maynar! Ob coas I gub it him."

"And you think no one saw you?"

"Don't 'tink anyting 'bout it. Satin shoo nobody see dat. Sabby, she drop de leetle billydou right into de genlum's pocket—de outside coat pocket—wha it went down slick out ob sight. Make you mind easy 'bout dat, Missy Blanche. 'Twan't possible nob'dy ked a seed de tramfer. Dey must ha hab de eyes ob an Argoos to dedect dat."

The over-confidence with which Sabby spoke, indicated a doubt.

She had one: for she had noticed eyes upon her, though not those of an Argus. They were in the head of Blanche's own cousin, Scudamore.

The Creole suspected that he had seen her deliver the note, but took care to keep her suspicions to herself.

"No, missy dear," she continued. "Doan

trouble you head 'bout dat 'ere. Sabby gub de note all right. Darfore why shed you fadda hab 'spicion 'bout it?"

"I don't know," answered the young girl.

"And yet I cannot help having fear."

She lay for a while silent, as if reflecting. It was not altogether on her fears.

"What did he say to you, Sabby?" she asked at length.

"You mean Massa Maynar?"

"Yes."

"He no say much. Da wan't no time."

"Did he say anything?"

"Wa, yes," drawled the Creole, nonplussed for an answer—"yes; he say, 'Sabby—you good Sabby; you tell Missy Blanche, dat no matter what turn up, I lub her for ebba an ebba mo.'"

The Creole displayed the natural cunning of her race in conceiving this passionate speech—their adroitness in giving tongue to it.

It was a fiction, besides being commonplace. Notwithstanding this, it gave gratification to her young mistress, as she intended it should.

And it also brought sleep to her eyes. Soon after, resting her cheek upon the pillow, whose white case was almost hidden under the loose flood of her dishevelled hair, she sank into slumber.

It was pleasant, if not profound. Sabby, sitting beside the bed, and gazing upon the countenance of the sleeper, could tell by the play of her features that her spirit was disturbed by a dream.

It could not be a painful one. Otherwise would it have contradicted the words, that in soft murmuring came forth from her unconscious lips:

"I now know that he loves me. Oh! it is sweet—so sweet!"

"Dat young gal am in lub to de berry tops

ob her toe nails. Sleepin' or wakin' she nebba
get cured ob dat passion—nebba !”

And with this sage forecast, the Creole took
up the bedroom candlestick, and silently re-
tired.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PAINFUL PROMISE.

HOWEVER light and sweet had been her slumber, Blanche Vernon awoke with a heaviness on her mind.

Before her, in her sleep, had been a face, on which she loved to look.

Awake, she could think only of one she had reason to fear—the face of an angry father!

The Creole *confidante*, while dressing her, observed her trepidation, and endeavoured to inspire her with courage.

In vain.

The young girl trembled as she descended the stair, in obedience to the summons for breakfast.

There was no need yet. She was safe in the company of her father's guests, assembled around the table. The only one missing was Maynard.

But no one made remark ; and the gap had been more than filled up by some fresh arrivals—among them a distinguished foreign nobleman.

Thus screened, Blanche was beginning to gain confidence—to hope her father would say nothing to her of what had passed.

She was not such a child as to suppose he would forget it. What she most feared was his calling her to a confession.

And she dreaded this, from a knowledge of her own heart. She knew that she could not, and would not, deceive him !

The hour after breakfast was passed by her

in feverish anxiety. She watched the gentlemen as they went off, guns in hand, and dogs at heel. She hoped to see her father go along with them.

He did not; and she became excitedly anxious on being told that he intended staying at home.

Sabina had learnt this from his valet.

It was almost a relief to her, when the footman, approaching with a salute, announced that:

“Sir George wished to see her in the library.”

She turned pale at the summons. She could not help showing emotion, even in the presence of the servant.

But the exhibition went no further; and, recovering her proud air, she followed him in the direction of the library.

Her heart again sank as she entered. She saw that her father was alone; and by his

serious look, she knew she was approaching an ordeal.

It was a strange expression, that upon Sir George's face. She had expected anger. It was not there. Nor even severity. The look more resembled one of sadness.

And there was the same in the tone of his voice, as he spoke to her.

"Take a seat, my child," were his first words, as he motioned her to a sofa.

She obeyed without making answer.

She reached the sofa not an instant too soon. She felt so crushed in spirit, she could not have kept upon her feet much longer.

There was an irksome interlude, before Sir George again opened his lips. It seemed equally so to him. He was struggling with painful thoughts.

"My daughter," said he, making an effort to still his emotion, "I need not tell you for what reason I've sent for you?"

He paused, though not for a reply. He did not expect one. It was only to gain time for considering his next speech.

The child sate silent, her body bent, her arms crossed over her knees, her head drooping low between them.

"I need not tell you, either," continued Sir George, "that I overheard what passed between you and——"

Another pause, as if he hated to pronounce the name.

"This stranger, who has entered my house like a thief and a villain."

In the drooping form before him there was just perceptible the slightest start, followed by a tinge of red upon her cheek, and a shivering throughout her frame.

She said nothing: though it was plain the speech had given pain to her.

"I know not what words may have been exchanged between you before. Enough what

I heard last night—enough to have broken my heart.”

“O, father!”

“’Tis true, my child! You know how carefully I’ve brought you up, how tenderly I’ve cherished, how dearly I love you!”

“O, father!”

“Yes, Blanche; you’ve been to me all your mother was; the only thing on earth I had to care for, or who cared for me. And this to arise—to blight all my fond expectations—I could not have believed it!”

The young girl’s bosom rose and fell in convulsive undulations, while big teardrops ran coursing down her cheeks, like a spring shower from the blue canopy of heaven.

“Father, forgive me! You will forgive me!” were the words to which she gave utterance—not in continued speech, but interrupted by spasmodic sobbing.

“Tell me!” said he, without responding to

the passionate appeal. "There is something I wish to know—something more. Did you speak to—to Captain Maynard—last night, after——"

"After when, papa?"

"After parting from him outside, under the tree?"

"No, father; I did not.

"*But you wrote to him?*"

The cheek of Blanche Vernon, again pale, suddenly became flushed to the colour of carmine. It rose almost to the blue irides of her eyes, still glistening with tears!

Before, it had been a flush of indignation. Now it was the blush of shame. What her father had seen and heard under the deodara, if a sin, was not one for which she felt herself accountable. She had but followed the promptings of her innocent heart, benighted by the noblest passion of her nature.

What she had done since was an action she

could have controlled. She was conscious of disobedience : and this was to be conscious of having committed crime.

She did not attempt to deny it. She only hesitated through surprise at the question.

“ You wrote a note to him ? ” said her father, repeating it with a slight alteration in the form.

“ I did.”

“ I will not insist on knowing what was in it. From your candour, my child, I’m sure you would tell me. I only ask you to promise : that you will not write to him again.”

“ O, father ! ”

“ That you will neither write to him, nor see him.”

“ O, father ! ”

“ On this I insist. But not with the authority I have over you. I have no faith in that. I ask it of you as a favour. I ask it on my knees, as your father, your dearest friend.

Full well, my child, do I know your honourable nature; and that if given, it will be kept. Promise me then: that you will neither write to, nor see, him again!"

Once more the young girl sobbed convulsively. Her own father—her proud father at her feet as an intercessor! No wonder she wept!

And with the thought of for ever, and by one single word, cutting herself off from all communication with the man she loved—the man who had saved her life, only to make it for ever after unhappy!

No wonder she hesitated! No wonder that for a time her heart balanced between duty and love—between parent and lover!

"Dear, dear child!" pursued her father, in a tone of appealing tenderness. "Promise you will never know him more—without my permission!"

Was it the agonized accents that moved

her? Was it some vague hope, drawn from the condition with which the appeal was concluded?

Whether or no, she gave the promise; though to pronounce it was like splitting her heart in twain!

CHAPTER IX.

SPIES.

THE friendship between Kossuth and Captain Maynard was of no common character. It had not sprung out of a mere chance acquaintance, but from circumstances calculated to cause mutual respect and admiration.

In Maynard, the illustrious Magyar saw a man like himself—devoted heart and soul to the cause of liberty.

True, he had as yet done little for it. But this did not negative his intention, fixed and fearless. Kossuth knew he had ventured out into the storm to shake a hand with, and draw a sword in, his defence. Too late for the

battle-field, he had since defended him with his pen ; and in the darkest hour of his exile, when others stood aloof.

In Kossuth, Maynard recognised one of the "great ones of the world"—great not only in deeds and thoughts, but in all the divine attributes of humanity—in short, goodly great.

It was in contemplating Kossuth's character, he first discovered the falsity of the trite phrase, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Like most proverbs, true only when applied to ordinary men and things. The reverse with men truly great.

To his own valet Kossuth would have been a hero. Much more was he one in the eyes of his friend.

The more Maynard knew of him, the more intimate their relationship became, the less was he able to restrain his admiration.

He had grown not only to admire, but love

him; and would have done for him any service consistent with honour.

Kossuth was not the man to require more.

Maynard was witness to the pangs of his exile, and sympathised with him as a son, or brother. He felt indignant at the scurvy treatment he was receiving, and from a people boastful of its hospitality!

This indignation reached its highest, when on a certain day Kossuth, standing in his studio, called his attention to a house on the opposite side of the street: telling him it was inhabited by *spies*.

“Spies! What kind of spies?”

“Political, I suppose we may call them.”

“My dear Governor, you must be mistaken! We have no such thing in England. It would not be permitted for a moment—that is, if known to the English people.”

It was Maynard himself who was mistaken.

He was but echoing the popular boast, and belief, of the day.

There *were* political spies for all that; though it was the supposed era of their first introduction, and the thing was not known. It became so afterward; and was permitted by this people—silently acquiesced in by John Bull, according to his custom when any such encroachment is made—so long as it does not increase the tax upon his beer.

“Whether known or not,” answered the ex-Governor, “they are there. Step forward to the window here, and I shall show you one of them.”

Maynard joined Kossuth at the window, where he had been for a time standing.

“You had better keep the curtain as a screen—if you don’t wish to be recognized.”

“For what should I care?”

“Well, my dear captain, this is your own country. Your coming to my house may

compromise you. It will make you many powerful enemies."

"As for that, Governor, the thing's done already. All know me as your friend."

"Only as my defender. All do not know you as a plotter and conspirator—such as the *Times* describes *me*."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the elect of a German revolutionary committee. "Much do I care about that! Such a conspirator. I'd be only too proud of the title. Where is this precious spy?"

As Maynard put the question, he stepped on into the window, without thinking of the curtain.

"Look up to that casement, in the second story," directed Kossuth; "the cottage nearly opposite—first window from the corner. Do you see anything there?"

"No; nothing but a Venetian blind."

"But the laths are apart. Can you see

nothing behind them? I do distinctly. The scoundrels are not cunning. They forget there's a back light beyond, which enables me to take note of their movements."

"Ah!" said Maynard, still gazing. "Now I see. I can make out the figure of a man seated, or standing, in the window."

"Yes; and there he is seated or standing all day; he or another. They appear to take it in turns. At night they descend to the street. Don't look any longer! He is watching us now; and it won't do to let him know that he's suspected. I have my reasons for appearing ignorant of this espionage."

Maynard, having put on a careless look, was about drawing back, when a Hansom cab drove up to the gate of the house opposite; discharging a gentleman, who, furnished with a gate-key, entered without ringing the bell.

"That," said Kossuth, "is the chief spy, who appears to employ a considerable staff—

among them a number of elegant ladies. My poor concerns must cost your government a good sum."

Maynard was not attending to the remark. His thoughts, as well as eyes, were still occupied with the gentleman who had got out of the cab ; and who, before disappearing behind the lilacs and laurels, was recognized by him as his old antagonist, Swinton !

Captain Maynard did that he had before refused, and suddenly. He concealed himself behind the window curtain !

Kossuth observing it, inquired why ?

" I chance to know the man," was Maynard's answer. " Pardon me, Governor, for having doubted your word ! I can believe *now*, what you've told me, . Spies ! Oh ! if the English people knew this ! They would not stand it !"

" Dear friend ! don't go into rhapsodies ! They will stand it."

"But I won't!" cried Maynard, in a frenzy of indignation. "If I can't reach the head of this fiendish conspiracy, I'll punish the tool thus employed. Tell me, Governor, how long since these foul birds have built their nest over there?"

"They came about a week ago. The house was occupied by a bank clerk—a Scotchman, I believe—who seemed to turn out very suddenly. They entered upon the same day."

"A week?" said Maynard, reflecting. "That's well. *He* cannot have seen me. It's ten days since I was here—and—and——"

"What are you thinking of, my dear captain?" asked Kossuth, seeing that his friend was engaged in deep cogitation.

"Of a *revanche*—a revenge, if you prefer having it in our vernacular."

"Against whom?"

"That scoundrel of a spy—the chief one. I know him of old. I've long owed him a

score on my own account; and I am now doubly in his debt on yours, and that of my country—disgraced by this infamy!”

“And how would you act?”

Maynard did not make immediate answer. He was still reflecting.

“Governor!” he said, after a time, “you’ve told me that your guests are followed by one or other of these fellows?”

“Always followed; on foot if they be walking; in a cab if riding. It is a Hansom cab that follows them—the same you saw just now. It is gone; but only to the corner, where it is kept continually on the stand—it’s driver having instructions to obey a signal.”

“What sort of a signal?”

“It is made by the sounding of a shrill whistle—a dog-call.”

“And who rides in the Hansom?”

“One or other of the two fellows you have seen. In the day-time it is the one who occu-

pies the blinded window ; at night the duty is usually performed by the gentleman just returned—your old acquaintance, as you say.”

“This will do !” said Maynard, in soliloquy.

Then, turning to Kossuth, he inquired :

“Governor! Have you any objection to my remaining your guest till the sun goes down, and a little after?”

“My dear captain! Why do you ask the question? You know how glad I shall be of your company.”

“Another question. Do you chance to have in your house such a thing as a horse-whip?”

“My adjutant, Ihasz, has, I believe. He is devoted to hunting.”

“Still another question. Is there among madam’s drygoods half a yard of black crape? A quarter of a yard will do.”

"Ah!" sighed the exile, "my poor wife's wardrobe is all of that colour. I'm sure she can supply you with plenty of crape. But say, *cher capitaine!* what do you want with it?"

"Don't ask me to tell you, your Excellency—not now. Be so good as to lend me those two things. To-morrow I shall return them; and at the same time give you an account of the use I have made of them. If fortune favour me, it will be then possible to do so."

Kossuth, perceiving that his friend was determined on reticence, did not further press for an explanation.

He lit a long chibouque, of which some half dozen—presents received during his captivity at Kutayah, in Turkey—stood in a corner of the room.

Inviting Maynard to take one of them, the two sat smoking and talking; till the light

of a street-lamp, flashing athwart the window, told them the day was done.

"Now, Governor!" said Maynard, getting up out of his chair; "I've but one more request to make of you: that you will send out your servant to fetch me a cab."

"Of course," said Kossuth, touching a spring-bell, that stood on the table of his studio.

A domestic made appearance—a girl whose stolid German physiognomy Maynard seemed to distrust. Not that he disliked her looks; but she wasn't the thing for his purpose.

"Does your Excellency keep a man-servant?" he asked. "Excuse me for putting such a question!"

"Indeed, no, my dear captain! In my poor exiled state I do not feel justified. If it is only to fetch a cab, Gertrude can do it. She speaks English well enough for that."

Maynard once more glanced at the girl—still distrustingly.

“Stay!” said Kossuth. “There’s a man comes to us in the evenings. Perhaps he is here now. Gertrude! Is Karl Steiner in the kitchen?”

“Ya,” was the laconic answer.

“Tell him to come to me.”

Gertrude drew back; perhaps wondering why *she* was not considered smart enough to be sent for a hackney.

“He’s an intelligent fellow, this Karl,” said Kossuth, after the girl had gone out of the room. “He speaks English fluently, or you may talk to him in French; and you can also trust him with your confidence.”

Karl came in.

His looks did not belie the description the ex-Governor had given of him.

“Do you know anything of horses?” was the first question, put to him in French.

"I have been ten years in the stables of Count Teleki. His Excellency knows that."

"Yes, captain. This young man has been groom to our friend Teleki; and you know the count's propensity for horseflesh."

Kossuth spoke of a distinguished Hungarian noble; then, like himself, a refugee in London.

"Enough!" said Maynard, apparently satisfied that Steiner was his man. "Now, Monsieur Karl, I merely want you to call me a cab."

"Which sort, *votre seigneurie*?" asked the ex-groom, giving the true stable salute. "Hansom, or four-wheeler?"

"Hansom," replied Maynard, pleased with the man's sharpness.

"*Très bien.*"

"And hear me, Monsieur Karl; I want you to select one with a horse that can *go*. You understand me?"

“Parfaitement.”

“When you’ve brought it to the gate, come inside here; and don’t wait to see me into it.”

With another touch to his cap, Karl went off on his errand.

“Now, Governor!” said Maynard, “I must ask you to look up that horsewhip, and quarter-yard of crape.”

Kossuth appeared in a quandary.

“I hope, captain,” he said, “you don’t intend any——”

“Excuse me, your Excellency,” said Maynard, interrupting him. “I don’t intend anything that may compromise *you*. I have my own feelings to satisfy in this matter—my own wrongs I might call them; more than that: those of my country.”

The patriotic speech went home to the Hungarian patriot’s heart. He made no farther attempt at appeasing the irate adven-

turer ; but stepping hastily out of the room, soon returned, carrying the crape and horse-whip—the latter a true hound-scorer, with buckhorn handle.

The gritting of wheels on the gravel told that the cab had drawn up before the gate.

“Good-night, Governor!” said Maynard, taking the things from Kossuth’s hand. “If the *Times* of to-morrow tells you of a gentleman having been soundly horsewhipped, don’t say it was I who did it!”

And with this singular caution, Maynard made his adieus to the ex-Dictator of Hungary!

CHAPTER X.

TWO CABS.

IN London dark nights are the rule, not the exception. More especially in the month of November; when the fog rolls up from the muddy Thames, spreading its plague-like pall over the metropolis.

On just such a night a cab might have been seen issuing from the *embouchure* of South Bank, passing down Park Road, and turning abruptly into the Park, through the "Han-over Gate."

So dense was the fog, it could only have been seen by one who chanced to be near it; and very near to know that it was a Hansom.

The bull's-eye burning overhead in front reflected inside just sufficient light to show that it carried only a single "fare," of the masculine gender.

A more penetrating light would have made apparent a gentleman—so far as dress was concerned—sitting with something held in his hand that resembled a hunting-whip.

But the brightest light would not have sufficed for the scanning of his face—concealed as it was behind a covering of crape.

Before the cab carrying him had got clear of the intricacies of South Bank, a low whistle was heard both by him and his driver.

He seemed to have been listening for it; and was not surprised to see another cab—a Hansom like his own—standing on the corner of Park Road as he passed out—its Jehu, with reins in hand, just settling him-

self upon his seat, as if preparing to start. Any one, who could have looked upon his face at the moment, could have told he had been expecting it.

Nor was he astonished, on passing through Hanover Gate, to perceive that the second cab was coming after him.

If you enter the Regent's Park by this gate, take the left-hand turning, and proceed for about a quarter of a mile, you will reach a spot, secluded as any within the limits of London. It is where the canal, traversing along the borders of the Park, but inside its palings, runs between deep embankments, on both sides densely wooded. So solitary is this place, that a stranger to the locality could not believe himself to be within the boundaries of the British metropolis.

A lamp at long distances occasionally reflects its feeble light upon the painted faces of those courtezans dangerous to be en-

countered; still more rarely does it glance upon the bright buttons of a patrolling policeman.

On the night in question neither the Park hag, nor its constable, were encountered along the drive. The damp, dense fog rendered it uncomfortable for both.

All the more favourable for him carried in the leading cab, whose design required darkness.

"Jarvey!" said he, addressing himself to his driver, through the little trap-door overhead. "You see that Hansom behind us?"

"Can't see, but I hear it, sir."

"Well; there's a gentleman inside it I intend horsewhipping."

"All right, sir. Tell me when you want to stop."

"I want to stop about three hundred yards this side of the Zoological Gardens. There's a copse that comes close to the road. Pull

up alongside of it; and stay there till I return to you."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the driver, who, having received a sovereign in advance, was dead-bent on obedience. "Anything else I can do for your honour?"

"All I want of you is: if you hear any interference on the part of *his* driver, you might leave your horse for a little—just to see fair play."

"Trust me, your honour! Don't trouble yourself about that. I'll take care of him!"

If there be any chivalry in a London cabman, it is to be found in the driver of a Hansom—especially after having received a sovereign with the prospect of earning another. This was well known to his "fare" with the craped face.

On reaching the described copse the leading cab was pulled up—its passenger

leaping instantly out, and gliding in under the trees.

Almost at the same instant, its pursuer came to a stand—somewhat to the surprise of him who sat inside it.

“They’ve stopped, sir,” said the driver, whispering down through the trap.

“I see that, d—n them! What can it be for?”

“To give you a horsewhipping!” cried a man with a masked face, springing up on the footboard, and clutching the inquirer by the collar.

A piteous cry from Mr. Swinton—for it was he—did not hinder him from being dragged out of his Hansom, and receiving a chastisement he would remember to his dying day!

His driver, leaping from the box, made show to interfere. But he was met by another driver equally eager, and somewhat

stronger ; who, seizing him by the throat, didn't let go his hold of him till he had fairly earned the additional sovereign !

A policeman who chanced to overhear the piteous cries of Swinton, came straddling up to the spot. But only after the scuffle had ended, and the wheels of a swift cab departing through the thick fog, told him he was too late to take the aggressor into custody !

The spy proceeded no farther.

After being 'disembarrassed' of the policeman, he was but too happy to be driven back to the villa in South Bank.

CHAPTER XI.

DISINTERESTED SYMPATHY.

ON arriving at his own residence, Swinton's servants scarcely recognised him. It was as much as his own wife could do. There were several dark wales traced diagonally across his cheeks, with a purple shading around his left "peeper;" for in punishing the spy, Maynard had made use not only of an implement of the hunting field, but one more peculiar to the "ring."

With a skin full of sore bones, and many ugly abrasions, Swinton tottered indoors, to receive the sympathies of his beloved Fan.

She was not alone in bestowing them. Sir

Robert Cottrell had dropped in during his absence ; and the friendly baronet appeared as much pained as if the sufferer had been his brother.

He had less difficulty in counterfeiting sorrow. His chagrin at the quick return supplied him with an inspiration.

"What is it, my dear Swinton ? For heaven's sake tell us what has happened to you ?"

"You see, Sir Robert ?" answered the maltreated man.

"I see that you've suffered some damage. But who did it ?"

"Footpads in the Park. I was driving around it to get to the east side. You know that horrid place this side of the Zoo Gardens, where those hags——"

"Oh, yes," answered Sir Robert, who had himself been "accosted" by them.

"Well ; I'd got round there, when all at

once the cab was stopped by half a score of scoundrels—their pals, I supposed—and I was instantly pulled out into the road. While half of them took hold of the driver, the other half proceeded to search my pockets. Of course I resisted ; and you see what's come of it. They'd have killed me, but for a policeman who chanced to come up, after I'd done my best, and was about getting the worst of it. They then ran off, leaving me in this precious condition — d——n them !”

“D——n them !” said Sir Robert, repeating the anathema with pretended indignation. “Do you think there's no chance of your being able to identify them ?”

“Not the slightest. The fog was so thick you could have cut it with a knife ; and they ran off, before the policeman could get hold of any one of them. In his long cumbersome coat it would have been simple non-

sense to follow. He said so; and of course I could only climb back into my cab and drive home here. It's lucky I had a cab: for damme, if I believe I could have walked it!"

"By Jove! you do appear damaged!" said the sympathising baronet. "Don't you think you had better go to bed?"

Sir Robert had a design in the suggestion.

"Oh, no," rejoined Swinton, who, despite the confusion of his ideas, perfectly understood it. "I'm not so bad as that. I'll take a lie-down on this sofa; and you, Fan, order me some brandy and water! You'll join me, Sir Robert. I'm still able to smoke a cigar with you."

"You'd better have an oyster to your eye!" said the baronet, drawing out his glass and scrutinizing the empurpled peeper. "It will keep down that 'mouse' that seems to be creeping out underneath it. 'Twill help to take out the colour."

"A devilish good idea! Fan, send one of the servants for an oyster. Stay; while they're about it they may as well bring a couple of dozen. Could you eat some, Sir Robert?"

Sir Robert thought he could. He did not much care for them, but it would be an excuse to procrastinate his stay. Perhaps something might turn up to secure him a *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Swinton. He had just commenced one that was promising to be agreeable, when so unexpectedly interrupted.

"We may as well make a supper of it!" suggested Swinton, who having already taken a gulp of the brandy and water, was feeling himself again.

"Let the servant order three dozen, my dear. That will be a dozen for each of us."

"No, it won't," jokingly rejoined the baronet. "With three dozen, some of us will have to be contented with eleven."

"How so, Sir Robert?"

"You forget the oyster that is to go to your eye. And now I look more carefully at that adolescent mouse, I think it will require at least a couple of the bivalves to give it a proper covering."

Swinton laughed at the baronet's ready wit. How could he help it?

"Well, let them be baker's dozen," he said. "That will cover everything."

Three baker's dozen were ordered and brought.

Fan saw to them being stewed in the kitchen, and placed with appropriate "trimmings" on the table; while the biggest of them, spread upon a white rag, was laid against her husband's eye, and there snugly bandaged.

It blinded that one eye. Stingy as he was, Sir Robert would have given a sovereign had it shut the sight out of both!

But it did not; and the three sate down to supper, his host keeping the sound eye upon him.

And so carefully was it kept upon him, that the baronet felt bored with the situation, and wished himself back at his club.

He thought of making some excuse to escape from it; and then of staying, and trying to make the best of it.

An idea occurred to him.

"This brute sometimes gets drunk," was his mental soliloquy, as he looked across the table at his host with the Cyclopean eye. "If I can make him so, there might be a chance of getting a word with her. I wonder whether it can be done? It can't cost much to try. Half a dozen of champagne ought to do it.

"I say, Swinton!" he said aloud, addressing his host in a friendly familiar manner. "I never eat stewed oysters without cham-

pagne. Have you got any in the house? Excuse me for asking the question! It's a positive impertinence."

"Nothing of the sort, Sir Robert. I'm only sorry to say there's not a single bottle of champagne in my cellar. We've been here such a short while, and I've not had time to stock it. But no matter for that. I can send out, and get——"

"No!" said the baronet, interrupting him. "I shan't permit that; unless you allow me to pay for it."

"Sir Robert!"

"Don't be offended, my dear fellow. That isn't what I mean. The reason why I've made the offer is because I know you can't get *real* champagne in this neighbourhood—not nearer than Winckworth and Price, in the Marylebone Road. Now, it so happens, that they are my wine merchants. Let me send to them. It isn't very far. Your ser-

vant, in a Hansom cab, can fetch the stuff, and be back in fifteen minutes. But to get the right stuff he must order it for *me*."

Sir Robert's host was not the man to stand upon punctilios. Good champagne was not so easily procured—especially in the neighbourhood of St. John's Wood. He knew it; and, surrendering his scruples, he rang the bell for the servant, permitting Sir Robert to write out the order. It was *carte blanche*, both for the cab and champagne.

In less than twenty minutes the messenger returned, bringing back with him a basket of choice "*Cliquot*."

In five minutes more a bottle was uncorked; and the three sat quaffing it, Swinton, his wife, and the stingy nobleman who stood treat—not stingy now, over that which promised him a pleasure.

CHAPTER XII.

AN IRKSOME IMPRISONMENT.

SUCCEEDING his castigation, it was all of a week before Mr. Swinton could make appearance upon the streets—during daylight.

The discoloration of his cheeks, caused by the horsewhip, was slow of coming out ; and even the oyster kept on for twenty-four hours failed to eliminate the purple crescent under his eye.

He had to stay indoors—sneaking out only at night.

The pain was slight. But the chagrin was intolerable ; and he would have given a good

sum out of his spy pay to have had revenge upon the man who had so chastised him.

This was impossible; and for several reasons; among others, his ignorance of who it was. He only knew that his chastiser had been a guest of Kossuth; and this from his having come out of Kossuth's house. He had not himself seen the visitor as he went in; and his subordinate, who shared with him the duplicate duty of watching and dogging, did not know him. He was a stranger who had not been there before—at least since the establishment of the picket.

From the description given of his person, as also what Swinton had himself seen of it through the thick fog—something, too, from what he had felt—he had formed, in his own mind, a suspicion as to who the individual was. He could not help thinking of Maynard. It may seem strange he should have thought of him. But no; for the truth is,

that Maynard was rarely out of his mind. The affair at Newport was a thing not easily forgotten. And there was the other affair in Paris ; where Julia Girdwood had shown an interest in the Zouaves' captive that did not escape observation from her jealous escort.

He had been made aware of her brief absence from the Louvre Hotel ; and conjectured its object. Notwithstanding the apparent slight she had put upon his rival in the Newport ball-room, he suspected her of a secret inclining to him—unknown to her mother.

It made Swinton savage to think of it ; the more from a remembrance of another and older rivalry, in which the same man had outstripped him.

To be beaten in a love intrigue, backed out in a duel, and finally flogged with a horsewhip, are three distinct humiliations,

any one of which is enough to make a man savage.

And Swinton was so, to the point of ferocity.

That Maynard had done to him the two first, he knew—about the last he was not so certain. But he conjectured it was he who had handled the horsewhip. This, despite the obscurity caused by the fog, and the crape masking the face of his chastiser.

The voice that had accosted him, did not sound like Maynard's; but it also may have been masked!

During the time he was detained indoors, he passed a portion of it in thinking of revenge; and studying how he was to obtain it.

Had his patron seen him, as he sat almost continually behind the Venetian, with his eyes upon Kossuth's gate, he would have given him credit for an assiduous attention to his duties.

But he was not so honest as he seemed. Many visitors entered the opposite house—some of them strange-looking characters, whose very stride spoke of revolution—entered and took departure, without being dogged!

The spy, brooding over his own private resentment, had no thoughts to spare for the service of the State. Among the visitors of Kossuth he was desirous of identifying Captain Maynard.

He had no definite idea as to what he would do to him; least of all that of giving him into custody. The publicity of the police court would have been fatal to him—as damaging to his employer and patron. It might cause exposure of the existence of that spy system, hitherto unsuspected in England. The man, who had got out of the Hansom to horsewhip him, must have known that he was being followed, and wherefore. It would never do for the British public to know it.

Swinton had no intention of letting them know ; nor yet Lord ——, and his employer. To the latter, calling occasionally of evenings, he told the same story as that imparted to Sir Robert Cottrell—only with the addition that, the footpads had set upon him while in the exercise of his avocation as a servant of the State !

The generous nobleman was shocked at his mishap ; sympathized with him, but thought it better to say nothing about it ; hinted at an increase of pay ; and advised him, since he could not show himself during daylight on the streets, to take the air after night—else his health might suffer by a too close confinement !

The protégé accepted this advice ; several times going out of an evening, and betaking himself to a St. John's Wood tavern, where "euchre" was played in the parlour. He had now a stake, and could enjoy the game.

Twice, returning home at a late hour, he found the patron in his own parlour, quietly conversing with his wife. His lordship had simply called up to inquire after his health ; and having also some instructions to communicate, had been impatiently awaiting his return !

The patron did not say impatiently. He would not have been so impolite. It was an interpolation proceeding from the lips of " Fan."

And Swinton saw all this ; and much more. He saw new bracelets glistening upon his wife's wrist, diamond drops dangling from her ears, and a costly ring sparkling upon her finger—not there before !

He saw them, without inquiring whence they had come. He cared not ; or if he did, it was not with any distaste at their secret bestowal. Sir Robert Cottrell saw them, with more displeasure than he !

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CABRIOLET.

THERE was but one thing for which Richard Swinton really now cared. He liked "euchre;" he would have relished revenge; but there was a thought to which both these enjoyments had become subservient.

It was a passion rather than thought—its object Julia Girdwood.

He had grown to *love* her.

Such a man might be supposed incapable of having this passion. And in its purity, he was so.

But there is love in more ways than one; and in one of them the ex-guardsman's heart

had got engaged : in other words, he had got "struck."

It was love in its lowest sense ; but not on this account weakest.

In Swinton it had become strong enough to render him regardless of almost everything else. Even the villainous scheme, originally contrived for robbing Julia Girdwood of her fortune, had become secondary to a desire to possess himself of her person.

The former was not lost sight of ; only that the latter had risen into the ascendant.

On this account, more than any other, did he curse his irksome indoor life.

It occurred just after that pleasant dinner-party, when he supposed himself to have made an impression. It hindered him from following it up. Six days had elapsed, and he had seen nothing of the Girdwoods. He had been unable to call upon them. How could he with such a face, even by explaining

the damage done to it? Either way the thing was not to be thought of; and he had to leave them uncalled upon.

He fretted meanwhile, longing to look once more upon Julia Girdwood. Cards could not cure him of it; and what he saw, or suspected, in the conduct of his own wife, made him lean all the more to his longings: since the more did he stand in need of *distraction*.

He had other thoughts to distress him: fancies they might be. So long without seeing her, what in the meantime was transpiring? A beautiful woman, with wealth, she could not be going on unnoticed? Sure to be beset with admirers; some of them to become worshippers? There was Lucas, one of the last already; but Swinton did not deign to think of him. Others might make appearance; and among them one who would answer the conditions required by her mother before permitting her to marry?

How could he tell but that a real lord had already trumped up on the tapis; and was at that moment kneeling upon one of the Clarendon carpets, by the selvedge of her silken skirt?

Or if not a lord, might not Maynard be there, unknown to thê mother?

Swinton had this last fancy; and it was the least pleasant of all.

It was in his mind every day, as he sate by the window, waiting till the skin of his face should be restored to its natural colour.

And when this at length came to pass, he lost not another day; but proceeded to call upon the Girdwoods.

He went in tip-top style. His spy pay, drawn from such a generous patron, afforded it. No swell upon the streets was dressed in better fashion; for he wore a Poole coat, Melnotte boots, and a hat of Christy's make.

He did not walk, as on his first call at the Clarendon.

He was transported thither in a cabriolet, with a high-stepping horse between the shafts, and a top-boot tiger on the stand-board.

Mrs. Girdwood's apartments in the aristocratic hotel commanded a window fronting upon Bond Street. He knew that his turnout would be seen.

All these steps had been taken, with a view to carrying on the cheat.

And the cabriolet had been chosen for a special purpose. It was the style of vehicle in vogue among distinguished swells—notably young noblemen. They were not often seen upon the streets; and when seen attracting attention, as they should—being the handsomest thing upon wheels.

During one of her moments of enthusiasm, he had heard Julia Girdwood say she should

like to have a ride in one of them. He was just the man to drive her : for while a guardsman he had often handled the ribbons of a drag ; and was esteemed one of the best “ whips ” of his time.

If he could only coax Julia Girdwood into his cabriolet—of course also her mother to permit it—what an advantage it would give him ! An exhibition of his skill ; the opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* unrestrained—a chance he had not yet had ; these, with other contingencies, might tend to advance him in her estimation.

It was a delicate proposal to make. It would have been a daring one, but for the speech he had heard suggesting it. On the strength of this he could introduce the subject, without fear of offending.

She might go ? He knew she was a young lady fond of peculiar experiences, and not afraid of social criticism. She had never

submitted to its tyranny. In this she was truly American.

He believed she would go, or consent to it; and it would be simply a question of permission from the mother.

And after their last friendly interview, he believed that Mrs. Girdwood would give it.

Backed by such belief, there could be no harm in trying: and for this the cabriolet had been chartered.

Buoyant of hope, Mr. Swinton sprang out of the vehicle; tossed the reins to his tiger; and stepped over the threshold of the Clarendon.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SKILFUL DRIVER.

"MRS. GIRDWOOD at home?" he asked, addressing himself to the janitor of the hotel.

"I'll see, sir," answered the man, making him an obsequious bow, and hurrying away to the office.

The hall-keeper remembered the gent, who carried such good cigars, and was so liberal with them. He had been pleased with his appearance then. He liked it better now in a new coat, unquestionably a Poole, with pants, boots, and tile to correspond. Besides, he had glanced through the glass-door, and seen the cabriolet with its top-booted tiger.

To the owners of such he was instinctively polite; but more so to Mr. Swinton, remembering his choice cigars.

The ex-guardsman waited for his return with some anxiety. The cabriolet, tiger included, had cost him a "sov." It would be awkward, if the twenty shillings had been laid out in vain.

He was relieved at the return of the Clarendon Cerberus.

"Mrs. Girdwood and fambly are in, sir. Shall I send up your card?"

"Please do."

And Swinton, drawing out the bit of pasteboard, handed it over to the official.

A servant more active upon his limbs carried it upstairs.

"Nice lady, sir, Mrs. Girdwood?" remarked the hall-keeper, by way of "laying pipe" for a perquisite. "Nice fambly all on 'em; 'specially that young lady."

"Which of them?" asked Swinton, thinking it no harm to strengthen his friendship with the official. "There are two."

"Well, both on 'em for that matter, sir. They be both wonderful nice creeturs."

"Ah! true. But you've expressed a preference. Now which, may I ask, is the one you refer to as specially nice?"

The janitor was puzzled. He did not know which it would be most agreeable to the gentleman to hear praised.

A compromise suggested itself.

"Well, sir; the fair 'un's a remarkable nice young lady. She's got sich a sweet temper, an's dreadfully good-lookin', too. But, sir, if it come to a question of beauty, I shed say—in course I ain't much of a judge—but I shed say the dark 'un's a splendiferous creetur!"

The janitor's verdict left his judgment still somewhat obscure. But Mr. Swinton had no

time to reflect upon it. Mrs. Girdwood, not caring for expense, occupied a suite of apartments on the first floor; and the messenger soon returned.

He brought the pleasing intelligence, that the gentleman was to be "shown up."

There was an *empressement* in the servant's manner, that told the visitor he would be made welcome.

And he was; Mrs. Girdwood springing up from her seat, and rushing to the door to receive him.

"My lord! Mr. Swinton, I beg your pardon. A whole week, and you've not been near us! We were all wondering what had become of you. The girls here, had begun to think—shall I say it, girls?"

Both Julia and Cornelia looked a little perplexed. Neither was aware of what she had "begun to think" about the absence of Mr. Swinton.

"Aw—do tell me, by all means!" urged he, appealing to Mrs. Girdwood. "I'm vewy much intewested to know. It's so kind of the young ladies to think of me at all—a paw fawlorn bachelor!"

"I shall tell you then, Mr. Swinton, if you promise not to be offended!"

"Offended! Impawsible!"

"Well, then," continued the widow, without thinking more of the permission asked of "her girls," "we thought that some terrible affair had happened. Excuse me for calling it terrible. It would only be so to your numerous lady friends."

"What, pway?"

"That you'd been getting married!"

"Mawied! To whom?"

"Oh, sir; you need scarcely ask. Of course to the Honourable and very beautiful Miss Courtney."

Swinton smiled. It was a smile somewhat

resembling a grin. A terrible affair had happened to him ; but not quite so bad as being married to the Honourable Geraldine Courtney—otherwise Kate the coper!

“ Aw, ladies!” he replied, in a self-deprecating tone, “ you do me too much honaw. I am far from being a favowite with the lady in question. We are no gweat fwiends, I ashaw you.”

The assurance seemed gratifying to Mrs. Girdwood, and a little to Julia. Cornelia did not appear to care for it, one way or the other.

“ Fact is,” continued Swinton, following up the advantage gained by the incidental allusion to the Honourable Geraldine, “ I’ve just this moment come from qua’lling with her. She wished me to take her out faw a dwive. I wefused.”

“ Refused !” exclaimed Mrs. Girdwood, in surprise. “ Oh ! Mr. Swinton ! Refused such

a beautiful lady! So accomplished too! How could you?"

"Well, madame; as I've told you, Miss Courtney and I are not brother and sister. Besides, I drove her out yesterday, and that should plead my excuse. To-day I ordered my horse—my best one—just for a special purpose. I hope I shall not be disappointed?"

"What purpose?" inquired Mrs. Girdwood, her visitor's remark having suggested the question. "Excuse me, sir, for asking."

"I hope, madame, you will excuse me for telling you. In a conversation that occurred, some days ago, your daughter expressed a wish to take a ride in one of our English cabriolets. Am I right, Miss Girdwood?"

"True," assented Julia, "I did. I have a curiosity to be driven behind one of those high-stepping steeds!"

“ If yaw will do me the fayvaw to look out of this window, I think yaw will see one that answers the descwipton.”

Julia glided up to the window ; her mother going along with her. Miss Inskip did not stir from her seat.

Swinton’s turn-out was seen upon the street below : a cabriolet with a coat of arms upon the panel—a splendid horse between the shafts, pawing the pavement, chafing his bit, flinging the froth over his shining counter, and held in place by a miniature groom in top-boots and buckskins.

“ What a pretty equipage !” exclaimed Julia. “ I’m sure it must be pleasant to ride in ?”

“ Miss Girdwood ; if yaw will do me the honaw——”

Julia turned to her mother, with a glance that said :

“ May I ?”

"You may," was the look given back by Mrs. Girdwood.

How could she refuse? Had not Mr. Swinton denied the Honourable Geraldine, and given the preference to her daughter? An airing would do her good. It could do her no harm, in the company of a lord. She was free to take it.

Mrs. Girdwood signified her consent; and Julia hastened to dress for the drive.

There was frost in the air; and she came back from her room enveloped in costly furs.

It was a cloak of sea-otter, coquettishly trimmed, and becoming to her dark complexion.

She looked superb in it.

Swinton thought so, as with hopeful heart, but trembling hand, he assisted her into the cabriolet!

The drive was around the Park, into Ken-

sington Gardens, and then back to the Clarendon.

But not till after Mr. Swinton had passed along Park Lane, and stopped at the door of a great nobleman's residence.

"It is very wude of me, Miss Girdwood," said he, "but I have a call to make on his lawdship, by appointment; and I hope yaw will kindly excuse me?"

"By all means," said Julia, delighted with her accomplished cavalier, who had shown himself such a skilful driver.

"One moment—I shall not allow his lordship to detain me more than a moment."

And Swinton sprang out; surrendering the reins to his groom, already at the horse's head.

He was true to his promise. In a short time he returned—so short, that his lordship could scarce have done more than bid him the time of day.

In truth he had not seen the nobleman, nor intended seeing him either. It was a counterfeit call; and went no farther than a word or two exchanged with the house steward inside the hall.

But he did not tell this to his fair companion in the cabriolet; and she was driven back into Bond Street, and landed triumphantly at the Clarendon, under the eyes of her mother, admiring her from the window.

When that lady had an account of the drive in general, but more especially of the call that had been made, her respect for Mr. Swinton was still further increased. He was surely the thing sought for!

And Julia began to think so too.

CHAPTER XV.

A QUIET HOTEL.

By the drive Swinton believed himself to have achieved a grand success; and he determined to lose no time in following it up.

The ground seemed now well under him—enough to support him in making the proposal so long deferred.

And in less than three days from that time, he called at the Clarendon, and made it.

Favoured by an opportunity in which he found her alone, it was done direct, to the young lady herself.

But the answer was not direct—nor definite in any way. It was neither a “yes” nor a “no.” He was simply referred to her mother!

The equivocation was not exactly to his taste. It certainly seemed strange enough. Still, though a little chagrined, he was not altogether discomfited by it: for how could he anticipate refusal in the quarter to which he had been referred?

Obedient to the permission given him, he waited upon Girdwood *mère*; and to her repeated the proposal with all the eloquent advocacy he could command.

If the daughter’s answer had not been definite, that of the mother was; and to a degree that placed Mr. Swinton in a dilemma.

“Sir!” said she; “we feel very much honoured—both myself and daughter. But your lordship will excuse me for pointing

out to you: that, in making this proposal, you appear to have forgotten something."

"Pway what, madam, may I ask?"

"Your lordship has not made it in your own name; nor have you yet told us your title. Until that is done, your lordship will see: how absurd it would be for either my daughter, or myself, to give you a decisive answer? We cannot!"

Mrs. Girdwood did not speak either harshly, or satirically. On the contrary, she unburdened herself in the most conciliatory tone—in fear of offending his lordship, and causing him to declare "off."

She was but too anxious to secure him—that is, supposing him to be a lord. Had she known that he was not, her answer would have been delivered in very different terms; and the acquaintance between her and Mr. Swinton would have ended, with as little ceremony as it had been begun.

It seemed on the edge of such termination, as the pseudo-lord, stammering in his speech, endeavoured to make rejoinder.

And not much farther off, when this was made, and the old excuse still pleaded for preserving that inexplicable *incognito* !

Swinton was in truth taken by surprise ; and scarce knew what to say.

But the American mother did ; and in plain terms told him : that, until the title was declared, she must decline the proffered honour of having him for a son-in-law !

When *it* was made known, he might expect a more categorical answer.

Her tone was not such as to make him despair. On the contrary, it clearly indicated that the answer would be favourable, provided the conditions were fulfilled.

But then, this was sufficient for despair. How was he to make her believe in his having a title ?

“ By possessing it !” he said to himself, as, after the fruitless interview he strode off from the Clarendon Hotel. “ By possessing it,” he repeated. “ And, by heavens ! I shall possess it, as sure as my name’s Swinton.”

Further on he reflected :

“ Yes ! that’s the way. I’ve got the old *roué* in my power ! Only needs one step more to secure him. And he shall give me whatever I ask—even to a title !”

“ I know he can’t make me a lord ; but he can a knight, or a baronet. It would be all the same to her ; and with ‘ Sir ’ to my name, she will no longer deny me. With that, I shall get Julia Girdwood and her two hundred thousand pounds !

“ By heaven ! I care more for her, than her money. The girl has got into my heart. I shall go mad, if I fail to get her into my arms !”

Thus wildly reflecting, he continued to

traverse the streets: down Bond Street, along Piccadilly, into the neighbourhood of Leicester Square.

As if the devil had turned up to aid him in his evil designs, an episode occurred in exact consonance with them. It seemed an accident; though who could tell that it was one: since it might have been pre-arranged?

He was standing by the lamp-post, in the centre of the Piccadilly Circus, when a cab drove past, containing two fares—a lady and gentleman.

Both were keeping their faces well back from the window; the lady's under a thick veil; while that of the gentleman was screened by a copy of the "Times" newspaper held cunningly in hand, as if he was intensely interested in the perusal of some thundering leader!

In spite of this, Swinton recognized the

occupants of the cab : both of them. The lady was his own wife ; the gentleman his noble patron of Park Lane !

The cab passed him, without any attempt on his part to stay it. He only followed, silently, and at a quick pace.

It turned down the Haymarket, and then into the street known as Panton.

At the corner of Oxenden Street it drew up ; by the door of one of those quiet hotels, known only to those light travellers who journey without being encumbered with luggage.

The gentleman got out ; the lady after ; and both glided in through a door, that stood hospitably open to receive them.

The cabman, whose fare had been paid in advance, drove immediately away.

“ Enough !” muttered Swinton, with a diabolical grin upon his countenance. “ That will do. And now for a witness to make

good my word in a court of——Ha! ha! ha! It will never come to that.”

Lest it should, he hastened to procure the witness. He was just in the neighbourhood to make such a thing easy. He knew Leicester Square, its every place and purlieu; and among others one where he could pitch upon a “pal.”

In less than fifteen minutes’ time, he found one; and in fifteen more, the two might have been seen standing at the corner of Oxenden Street, apparently discussing of some celestial phenomenon that absorbed the whole of their attention!

They had enough left to give to a lady and gentleman, who shortly after came out of the “quiet hotel”—the lady first; the gentleman at an interval behind her.

They did not discover themselves to the lady, who seemed to pass on without observing them.

But as the gentleman went skulking by, both turned their faces towards him.

He, too, looked as if he did not see them ; but the start given, and the increased speed at which he hurried on out of sight, told that he had recognized at least one of them, with a distinctness that caused him to totter in his steps !

The abused husband made no movement to follow him. So far he was safe ; and in the belief that he—or she at least—had escaped recognition, he walked leisurely along Piccadilly, congratulating himself on his *bonne fortune* !

He would have been less jubilant, could he have heard the muttered words of his protégé, after the latter had parted from his “pal.”

“ I’ve got it right now,” said he. “ Knight-hood for Richard Swinton, or a divorce from his wife, with no end of damages ! God bless

the dear Fan, for playing so handsomely into my hand! God bless her!"

And with this infamy on his lips, the *ci-devant* guardsman flung himself into a Hansom cab, and hastened home to St. John's Wood.

CHAPTER XVI.

WANTED — A MASTER !

HAVING changed from soldier to author, Maynard was not idle in his new avocation.

Book after book came from his facile pen ; each adding to the reputation achieved by his first essay in the field of literature.

A few of the younger spirits of the press—that few *addictus jurare verbis nullius magistri*—at once boldly pronounced in their favour : calling them works of genius.

But the older hands, who constitute the members of the “Mutual Admiration Society”—those disappointed aspirants, who in all ages and countries assume the criticism

of art and authorship—could see in Maynard's writings only "sensation."

Drawing their inspiration from envy, and an influence not less mean—from that *magister*, the leading journal, whose very nod was trembling to them—they endeavoured to give satisfaction to the despot of the press, by depreciating the efforts of the young author.

They adopted two different modes of procedure. Some of them said nothing. These were the wiser ones; since the silence of the critic is his most eloquent condemnation. They were wiser, too, in that their words were in no danger of contradiction. The others spoke, but sneeringly and with contempt. They found vent for their spleen by employing the terms "melodrama," "blue-fire," and a host of hackneyed phrases, that, like the modern slang "sensational," may be conveniently applied to the most classic conceptions of the author.

How many of the best works of Byron, Shakespeare, and Scott, would escape the "sensation" category?

They could not deny that Maynard's writings had attained a certain degree of popularity. This had been achieved without their aid. But it was only evidence of the corrupted taste of the age!

When was there an age, without this corrupted taste?

His writings would not live. Of that they were certain!

They have lived ever since; and sold too, to the making of some half dozen fortunes—if not for himself, for those upon whom he somewhat unwarily bestowed them.

And they promise to abide upon the bookshelves a little longer; perhaps not with any grand glory—for the critics have taken care of that—but certainly not with any great accumulation of dust.

And the day may come, when these same critics may be dead, and the written thoughts of Mr. Maynard be no longer deemed *merely sensations*.

He was not thinking of this, while writing them. He was but pursuing a track, upon which the chances of life had thrown him.

Nor was it to him the most agreeable. After a youth spent in vigorous personal exertion—some of it in the pursuit of stirring adventure—the tranquil atmosphere of the studio was little to his taste. He endured it under the belief, that it was only to be an episode.

Any new path, promising adventure, would have tempted him from his chair, and caused him to fling his pen into the fire.

None offered ; and he kept on writing—writing—and thinking of Blanche Vernon.

And of her he thought unhappily ; for he

dared not write to her. That was a liberty denied him: not only from its danger, but his own delicate sense of honour.

It would have been denied him, too, from his not knowing her address. He had heard that Sir George Vernon had gone once more abroad—his daughter along with him. Whither, he had not heard; nor did he make much effort to ascertain. Enough for him that, abroad or at home, he would be equally excluded from the society of that young creature, whose image was scarce ever absent from his thoughts.

There were times, when it was painfully present; and he sought abstraction by a vigorous exercise of his pen.

At such times he longed once more to take up the sword as a more potent consoler; but no opportunity seemed to offer.

One night he was reflecting upon this—thinking of some filibustering expedition into

which he might fling himself—when a knock came to his door, as of some spirit invoked by his wishes.

“Come in!”

It was Roseveldt who answered the summons.

The count had become a resident of London—an idler upon town—for want of congenial employment elsewhere.

Some fragment of his fortune still remaining, enabled him to live the life of a *flaneur*; while his title of nobility gave him the *entrée* of many a good door.

But, like Maynard, he too was pining for an active life; and disgusted to look daily upon his sword, rusting ingloriously in its sheath!

By the mode in which he made entry, something whispered Maynard, that the time had come, when both were to be released from their irksome inaction. The count was

flurried, excited, tugging at his moustache, as if he intended tearing it away from his lip !

“What is it, my dear Roseveldt?”

“Don’t you smell gunpowder?”

“No.”

“There’s some being burnt by this time.”

“Where?”

“In Milan. The revolution’s broke out there. But I’ve no time to talk to you. Kossuth has sent me for you post-haste. He wants you to come at once. Are you ready?”

“You’re always in such haste, my dear count. But when Kossuth commands, you know my answer: I’m ready. It only needs to put on my hat.”

“On with it then, and come along with me!”

From Portman Square to St. John’s Wood is but a step; and the two were soon tra-

versing the somewhat crooked causeway of South Bank.

When close to Kossuth's residence they passed a man who stood, watch in hand, under a street lamp—as if trying to ascertain the time of night.

They knew he was shamming; but said nothing; and went on, soon after, entering the house.

Kossuth was within; and along with him several distinguished Hungarians.

“Captain Maynard!” he exclaimed, stepping out of the circle, and saluting his new-come guest.

Then taking him aside, he said:

“Look at this!”

While speaking, he had placed a slip of paper in Maynard's hands. It was written in cipher.

“A telegram!” muttered the latter, seeing the hieroglyphics.

"Yes," said Kossuth, proceeding to translate, and explain them. "The revolution has broken out in Milan. It is a rash affair, and, I fear, will end in defeat, perhaps ruin. Mazzini has done it, in direct opposition to my wishes and judgment. Mazzini is too sanguine. So are Turr and the others. They count on the Hungarian regiments stationed there, with the influence of my name among them. Giuseppe has taken a liberty with it, by using an old proclamation of mine, addressed to those regiments, while I was still prisoner at Kutayah. He has put it forth at Milan, only altering the date. I wouldn't so much blame him for that, if I didn't believe it to be sheer madness. With so many Austrians in the garrison at Milan—above all, those hireling Bohemian regiments—I don't think there's a chance of our success."

"What do *you* intend doing, Governor?"

“As to that, I have no choice. The game’s begun, and I must take part in it, *coute que coute*. This telegram is from my brave Turr, and he thinks there’s a hope. Whether or no, it will be necessary for me to go to them.”

“You are going then?”

“At once—if I can get. Therein, my dear sir, lies the difficulty. It is for that I have taken the liberty of sending for you.”

“No liberty, Governor. What can I do for you?”

“Thanks, dear captain! I shall waste no words, but say at once what I want with you. The only way for me to get to Milan is through the territory of France. I might go round by the Mediterranean; but that would take time. I should be too late. Across France then must I go, or not at all.”

"And what is to hinder you from travelling through France?"

"Louis Napoleon."

"True, he would: I need not have asked the question."

"He'd be sure to place me under arrest, and keep me so, as long as my liberty is deemed dangerous to the crowned conspirators. He has become their most trusted tipstaff and detective. There's not one of his *sergents-de-ville* who has not got my portrait in his pocket. The only chance left me, to run the gauntlet through France, is to travel in disguise. It is for that I want *you*."

"How can I assist you, my dear Governor?"

"By making me your servant—your *valet du voyage*."

Maynard could not help smiling at the idea. The man who had held mastery over

a whole nation, who had created an army of two hundred thousand men, who had caused trembling throughout the thrones of Europe—that man to be obsequiously waiting upon him, brushing his coat, handing him his hat, and packing his portmanteau!

“Before you make answer,” continued the ex-dictator of Hungary, “let me tell you all. If taken in France, you will have to share my prison;—if upon Austrian territory, your neck, like my own, will be in danger of a halter. Now, sir; do you consent?”

It was some seconds before Maynard made reply; though it was not the halter that hindered him. He was thinking of many other things—among them Blanche Vernon.

Perhaps but for the reminiscence of that scene under the *deodara*, and its results, he might have hesitated longer—have even

turned recreant to the cause of revolutionary liberty!

Its memory but stimulated him to fresh efforts for freedom, and, without staying longer, he simply said :

“ I consent !”

CHAPTER XVII.

PURCHASING A PASSPORT.

TWENTY-FOUR hours must elapse before Kossuth and his companion—or rather Captain Maynard and his servant—could set out on their perilous expedition.

It was of rigorous necessity that a passport should be obtained; either from the consular agent of France, or the British Foreign Office; and for this purpose daylight would be needed—in other words, it could not be had before the next day.

Kossuth chafed at the delay; and so, too, his new master—cursing, not for the first time, the vile system of passports.

Little thought either, that this delay was a

fortunate thing for them—a circumstance to which they were perhaps indebted for the saving of their lives!

Maynard preferred taking out the passport from the French consular agency. This, on account of less trouble and greater despatch, the British Foreign Office in true red tape style requiring the applicant to be *known*! Several days are often consumed before John Bull, going abroad, can coax his minister to grant him the scrap of paper necessary to his protection!

He must be first endorsed, by a banker, clergyman, or some other of the noted respectabilities of the land! John's master don't encourage vagabondage.

The French passport agent is more accommodating. The meagre emolument of his office makes the cash perquisite a consideration. For this reason the service is readily rendered.

Maynard, however, did not obtain the document without some difficulty. There was the question of his servant, who ought to have been there along with him!

The flunkey must present himself in *propria persona*! in order that his description should be correctly given upon the passport.

So said the French functionary in a tone of cold formality that seemed to forbid expostulation!

Although Maynard knew, that by this time, the noble Magyar had sacrificed his splendid beard, his fine face was too well-known about London to escape recognition in the streets. Especially would it be in danger of identification in the French consular office, King William Street, either by the passport agent himself or the half score of lynx-eyed spies always hanging around it.

Kossuth's countenance could never be passed off for the visage of a valet!

But Maynard thought of a way to get over the difficulty. It was suggested by the seedy coat, and hungry look, of the French official.

"It will be very inconvenient," he said. "I live in the West End, full five miles off. It's a long way to go, and merely to drag my servant back with me. I'd give a couple of sovereigns to be spared the trouble."

"I'm sorry," rejoined the agent, all at once becoming wonderfully civil to the man who seemed to care so little for a couple of sovereigns. "It's the regulation, as monsieur must know. But—if monsieur——"

The man paused, permitting the "but" to have effect.

"You would greatly oblige by saving me the necessity——"

"Could monsieur give an exact description of his servant?"

"From head to foot."

"*Très bien!* Perhaps that will be sufficient."

Without farther parley, a word-painting of the ex-Dictator of Hungary was done upon stamped paper.

It was a full-length portrait, giving his height, age, the hue of his hair, the colour of his skin, and the capacity in which he was to serve.

From the written description, not a bad sort of body-servant should be "James Dawkins."

"Exceedingly obliged, monsieur!" said Maynard, receiving the sheet from the agent, at the same time slipping into the hand that gave it a couple of shining sovereigns. Then adding, "Your politeness has saved me a world of trouble," he hastened out of the office, leaving the Frenchman in a state of satisfied surprise, with a grimace upon his countenance that only a true son of Gaul can give.

* * * * *

Early in the afternoon of that same day, master and man were quite ready to start.

The portmanteaus were packed, their travelling gear arranged, and tickets had been secured for the night mail, *viâ* Dover and Calais.

They only waited for the hour of its departure from London.

It was a singular conclave: that assembled in one of the rooms of Kossuth's residence in St. John's Wood.

It consisted of eight individuals; every one of whom bore a title either hereditary or honourably acquired.

All were names well known, most of them highly distinguished. Two were counts of Hungary, of its noblest blood—one a baron of the same kingdom; while three were general officers, each of whom had commanded a *corps d'armée*.

The seventh, and lowest in rank, was a simple captain—Maynard himself.

And the eighth—who was he?

A man dressed in the costume of a valet, holding in his hand a cockaded hat, as if about to take departure from the place.

It was curious to observe the others as they sate or stood around this semblance of a lacquey; counts, barons, and generals, all like him, hats in hand; not like him intending departure. They were only uncovered out of respect!

They talked with him in a tone not obsequious, though still in the way one speaks to a superior; while his answers were received with a deference that spoke of the truest esteem!

If there ever was proof of a man's greatness, it is when his associates in prosperity honour him alike in the hour of his adversity.

And such was the case with the ex-Dictator of Hungary, for it is scarce necessary to say that the disguised valet was Kossuth.

Even in those dark dreary hours of his exile, when his cause seemed hopeless, and the cold world frowned scornfully upon him, he might be seen surrounded, not by a circle of needy sycophants, but the noblest blood of Hungary, all deferent, all with hats in hand honouring him as in that hour when the destinies of their beloved country, as their own, were swayed by his will!

The writer of this tale has witnessed such a scene, and regards it as the grandest triumph of mind over matter, of truth over charlatanism, that ever came under his eyes.

The men now assembled around him were all in the secret of Kossuth's design. They had heard of the insurrectionary rising at Milan. It was the subject of their conversation; and most of them, like Kossuth himself,

were making ready to take part in the movement.

Most, too, like him, believed it to be an imprudent step on the part of Mazzini : for it was Mazzini who was citing it. Some of them pronounced it madness !

The night was a dark one, and favourable for taking departure. It needed this ; for they knew of the spies that were upon them.

But Maynard had taken precautions to elude the vigilance of these cur dogs of despotism.

He had designed a *ruse* that could not be otherwise than successful. There were two sets of portmanteaus—one empty, to leave Kossuth's house in the cab that carried the captain and his servant. This was to draw up at the north entrance of the Burlington Arcade, and remain there until its hirers should return from some errand to the shops of that fashionable promenade.

At the Piccadilly entrance another Hansom would be found holding the real luggage of the travellers, which had been transported the night before to the residence of the soldier-author.

They would be sharp detectives whom this scheme would not outwit.

Cunning as it was, it was never carried out. Thank God, it was not!

From what became known afterward, both Kossuth and Captain Maynard might well repeat the thanksgiving speech.

Had they succeeded in running the gauntlet of the English spies, it would have been but a baneful triumph. In less than twenty hours after, they would have been both inside a French prison—Kossuth to be transferred to a more dangerous dungeon in Austria—his pretended master, perhaps, to pine long in his cell, before the flag of his country would be again extended for his extradition.

They did not enter upon the attempt: not even so far as getting into the cab that stood waiting at Kossuth's gate. Before this preliminary step was taken, a man rushing into the house prevented their leaving it!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SHAM INSURRECTION.

It was Count Roseveldt who caused the change of programme, of which an explanation is needed.

Shortly before, the count, forming one of the circle around Kossuth, had slipped quietly away from it—sent forth by Kossuth himself to reconnoitre the ground.

His knowledge of London life—for he had long lived there—caused him to be thus chosen.

The object was to discover how the spies were placed.

The dark night favoured him ; and know-

ing that the spies themselves loved darkness, he sauntered toward a spot where he supposed they might be found.

He had not been long in it, when voices in conversation admonished him that men were near. He saw two of them.

They were approaching the place where he stood.

A garden gate, flanked by a pair of massive piers, formed a niche, dark, as the portals of Pluto.

Into this the count retreated; drawing himself into the smallest dimensions of which his carcase was capable.

A fog, almost palpable to the feel, assisted in screening him.

The two men came along; and, as good luck would have it, stopped nearly in front of the gate.

They were still talking, and continued to talk, loud enough for Roseveldt to hear them.

He did not know who they were; but their conversation soon told him. They were the spies who occupied the house opposite Kossuth—the very individuals he had sallied forth in search of.

The obscurity of the night hindered him from having a view of their faces. He could only make out two figures, indistinctly traceable through the filmy envelope of the fog.

But it mattered not. He had never seen these spies, and was, therefore, unacquainted with their personal appearance. Enough to hear what they were saying.

And he heard sufficient for his purpose—sufficient to keep him silent till they were gone; and then bring him back with an excited air into the circle from which he had late parted.

He burst into the room with a speech that caused astonishment—almost consternation!

"You must not go, Governor!" were the words that proceeded from his lips!

"Why?" asked Kossuth, in surprise, the question echoed by all.

"*Mein Gott!*" responded the Austrian.

"I've learnt a strange tale since I left you."

"What tale?"

"A tale about this rising in Milan. Is there on the earth a man so infamous as to believe it?"

"Explain yourself, count!"

It was the appeal of all present.

"Have patience, gentlemen! You'll need it all, after hearing me."

"Go on!"

"I found there *forbans*, as we expected. Two of them were in the street, talking. I had concealed myself in the shadow of a gateway; opposite which the scoundrels shortly after came to a stand. They did not see me; but I saw them, and what's better,

heard them. And what do you suppose I heard? *Peste!* you won't one of you believe it!"

"Tell us, and try!"

"That the rising in Milan is a sham—a decoy to entrap the noble Governor here, and others of us, into the toils of Austria. It has been got up for no other purpose—so said one of these spies to the other, giving the source whence he had his information."

"Who?"

"His employer, Lord ——."

Kossuth started. So did his companions; for the information, though strange to them, was not by any means incredible.

"Yes!" continued Roseveldt; "there can be no doubt of what I tell you. The spy who communicated it to his fellow, gave facts and dates, which he must have derived from a certain source; and for my own part I was already under the belief, that the thing

looked like it. I know the strength of those Bohemian regiments. Besides there are the Tyrolese sharpshooters—true body-guards of a tyrant. There could have been no chance for us, whatever Giuseppe Mazzini may think of it. It's certainly intended for a trap; and we must not fall into it. You will not go, Governor?"

Kossuth looked around the circle, and then more particularly at Maynard.

"Do not consult me," said the soldier-author. "I am still ready to take you."

"And you are quite sure you heard this?" asked the ex-Governor, once more turning to Roseveldt.

"Sure, your Excellency. I've heard it plain as words could speak. They are yet buzzing in my ears, as if they would burn them!"

"What do you say, gentlemen?" asked Kossuth, scrutinizing the countenances of

those around him. "Are we to believe in an infamy so atrocious?"

Before reply could be made, a ring at the gate-bell interrupted their deliberations.

The door opened, admitting a man who came directly into the room where the revolutionists were assembled.

All knew him as Colonel Ihasz, the friend and adjutant of Kossuth.

Without saying a word, he placed a slip of paper in the ex-Governor's hands.

All could see it was the transcript of a telegraphic message.

It was in a cipher; of which Kossuth alone had the key.

In sad tone, and with trembling voice, he translated it to a circle sad as himself:

"The rising has proved only an 'émeute.' There has been treachery behind it. The Hungarian regiments were this morning disarmed. Scores of the poor fellows are being shot.

Mazzini, myself, and others, are likely to share the same fate, unless some miraculous chance turns up in our favour. We are surrounded on all sides; and can scarce escape. For deliverance must trust to the God of Liberty.

“Turr.”

Kossuth staggered to a seat. He seemed as though he would have fallen on the floor!

“I too invoke the God of Liberty!” he cried, once more starting to his feet, after having a little recovered himself. “Can He permit such men as these to be sacrificed on the altar of Despotism?—Mazzini, and still more, the chivalrous Turr—the bravest—the best—the handsomest of my officers!”

No man, who ever saw General Turr, would care to question the eulogy thus bestowed upon him. And his deeds done since speak its justification.

The report of Roseveldt had but fore-

shadowed the terrible disaster, confirmed by the telegraphic despatch.

The count had spoken in good time. But for the delay occasioned by his discovery, Kossuth and Captain Maynard would have been on their way to Dover; too late to be warned—too late to be saved from passing their next night as guests of Louis Napoleon—in one of his prisons!

CHAPTER XIX.

A STATESMAN IN PRIVATE LIFE.

WRAPPED in a richly-embroidered dressing-gown, with tasselled cap set jauntily on his head—his feet in striped silk stockings and red morocco slippers—Swinton's noble patron was seated in his library.

He was alone ; soothing his solitude with a cigar—one of the best brand, from the *vuelta-de-abajo*.

A cloud upon his brow told that his spirit was troubled.

But it was only a slight ruffle, such as might spring from some unpleasantness. It was regret for the escape of Louis Kossuth,

from the toils that had been set for him, and set according to his lordship's own suggestions.

His lordship, along with other crown-commissioned conspirators, had expected much from the *émeute* at Milan. With all their cunning had they contrived that sham insurrection, in the hopes of getting within their jailers' grasp the great leaders of the "nationalities."

Their design was defeated by their own fears. It was a child whose teeth were too well grown to endure long nursing; and, before it could be brought to maturity, they were compelled to proclaim it a bastard.

This was shown by their sudden disarming of the Hungarian regiments, and the arrest of such of the compromised as had too rashly made appearance upon the spot.

There were shootings and hangings — a hecatomb. But the victims were among the

less prominent men of revolutionary record ; while the great chiefs succeeded in making good their escape.

Mazzini the "untakeable" got clear in a manner almost miraculous ; and so too the gallant Turr.

Thanks to the electric wires, whose silent speech even kings cannot control, Kossuth was spared the humiliation of imprisonment.

It was the thought of this that shadowed the spirit of Swinton's patron, as he sat reflecting upon the failure of the diabolical scheme.

His antipathy to the Magyar chief was two-fold. He hated him diplomatically, as one whose doctrines were dangerous to the "divine right" of kings. But he had also a private spite against him ; arising from a matter of a more personal kind. For words uttered by him of an offensive nature, as for acts done in connection with his employment

of the spies, Kossuth had called him to account, demanding retractation. The demand was made in a private note, borne by a personage too powerful to be slighted. And it elicited a reluctant but still truckling apology.

There were not many who knew of this episode in the life of the ex-Dictator of Hungary, so humiliating to the nobleman in question. But it is remembered by this writer; and was by his lordship with bitterness till the day of his death.

That morning he remembered it more bitterly than ever: for he had failed in his scheme of revenge, and Kossuth was still unharmed.

There was the usual inspiration given to the newspapers, and the customary outpouring of abuse upon the head of the illustrious exile.

He was vilified as a disturber, who dared not show himself on the scene of disturbance;

but promoted it from his safe asylum in England. He was called a "revolutionary assassin!"

For a time there was a cloud upon his name, but not for long. To defend him once more appeared Maynard with his trenchant pen. He knew, and could tell the truth.

He *did* tell it, hurling back his taunt upon the anonymous slanderer, by styling him the "assassin of the desk."

In fine, Kossuth's character came out; not only unscathed; but, in the eyes of all true men, stood clearer than ever.

It was this that chafed the vindictive spirit of his lordship, as he sate smoking an "emperor."

The influence of the nicotian weed seemed gradually to tranquillize him, and the shadow disappeared from his brow.

And he had solace from another source—from reflection on a triumph achieved; not

in the fields of diplomacy or war, but the court of Cupid. He was thinking of the many facile conquests he had made—consoling himself with the thought: that old age has its compensation, in fame, money, and power.

More particularly was his mind dwelling on his newest and latest *amourette*, with the wife of his protégé, Swinton. He had reason to think it a success: and attributing this to his own powers of fascination—in which he still fancifully believed—he continued to puff away at his cigar in a state of dreamy contentment.

It was a rude disturber to his Sardanapalian train of thought, as a footman gliding into the room, placed a card in his hand that carried the name of “Swinton.”

“Where is he?” was the question curtly put to the servant.

“Drawin’-room, your ludship.”

“ You should not have shown him there, till you’d learnt whether it was convenient for me to receive him.”

“ Pardon, your ludship. He walked right in ’ithout bein’ asked—sayin’ he wished very partickler to speak with your ludship.”

“ Show him in here, then !”

The flunkey made obeisance, and withdrew.

“ What can Swinton want now ? I have no business with him to-day ; nor any more, for that matter, if I could conveniently get rid of him. Walked straight in without being asked ! And wishes particularly to speak with me ! Rather cool that !”

His lordship was not quite cool himself, while making the reflection. On the contrary, a sudden pallor had shown itself on his cheeks, with a whiteness around the lips, as when a man is under the influence of some secret apprehension.

“I wonder if the fellow has any suspicion——”

His lordship’s reflection was stayed by the entrance of the “fellow” himself.

CHAPTER XX.

A MODEST DEMAND.

THE aspect of his protégé, as he stepped inside the room, was anything but reassuring to the sexagenarian deceiver.

On the contrary, his pale cheeks became paler, his white lips whiter. There was something in the ex-guardsman's eye and air, that bespoke a man having a grievance!

More than that, a man determined on its being righted. Nor could his lordship mistake that it was against himself. The bold, almost bullying, attitude of his visitor, so different from that hitherto held by him,

showed that, whatever might be his suit, it was not to be pressed with humility.

“What is it, my dear Swinton?” asked his scared patron, in a tone of pretended conciliation. “Is there anything I can do for you to-day? Have you any business?”

“I have; and a very disagreeable business at that.”

In the reply, “his lordship” did not fail to remark the discourteous omission of his title.

“Indeed!” he exclaimed, without pretending to notice it. “Disagreeable business? With whom?”

“With yourself, my lord.”

“Ah! you surprise—I do not understand you, Mr. Swinton.”

“Your lordship will, when I mention a little circumstance that occurred last Friday afternoon. It was in a street called Oxenden, south side of Leicester Square.”

It was as much as his lordship could do to retain his seat.

He might as well have risen; since the start he gave, on hearing the name "Oxenden," told that he knew all about the "little circumstance."

"Sir—Mr. Swinton! I do not comprehend you!"

"You do — perfectly!" was Swinton's reply, once more disrespectfully omitting the title.

"You *should* know," he continued. "Since you were in that same street, at the same time."

"I deny it."

"No use denying it. I chanced to be there myself, and saw you. And, although your lordship did keep your lordship's face well turned away, there can be no difficulty in swearing to it—neither on my part nor that of the gentleman who chanced to be

along with me ; and who knows your lordship quite as well as I."

There was tittle enough in this speech, but coupled with too much sarcasm.

"And what if I was in Oxenden Street at the time you say?" demanded the accused in a tone of mock defiance.

"Not much in that. Oxenden Street's as free to your lordship as to any other man. A little more free, I suspect. But then, your lordship was seen to come out of a certain house in that respectable locality, followed by a lady whom I have also good reason to know, and can certainly swear to. So can the friend who was with me."

"I cannot help ladies following me out of houses. The thing, I presume, was purely accidental."

"But not accidental her going in along with you—especially as your lordship had shown her the courtesy to hand her out of a

cab, after riding some way through the streets with her! Come, my lord, it's of no use your endeavouring to deny it. Subterfuge will not serve you. I've been witness to my own dishonour, as have several others besides. I seek reparation."

If all the thrones in Europe had been at that moment tumbling about his ears, the arch-conspirator of crowned heads would not have been more stunned by the *délabrement*. Like his celebrated prototype, he cared not that after him came the deluge; but a deluge was now threatening himself—a deep, damning inundation, that might engulf not only a large portion of his fortune, but a large measure of his fame!

He was all the more frightened, because both had already suffered from a shock somewhat similar.

Still fresh in the memory of the public was a great "*crim.-con. case*," in which his

name had been the prominent figure—being that of the defendant.

Scandal had been “hushed up;” no one knew how; though many have had the curiosity to inquire.

He knew how, to his cost; and this knowledge now caused him to bend before the blackguard standing impudent in his presence, and treating him to a style of talk, such as had never before been addressed to him!

He knew himself guilty, *and that it could be proved!*

He saw how idle would be the attempt to justify himself. He had no alternative but to submit to Swinton’s terms; and he only hoped that these, however onerous, might be obtained without exposure.

The pause that had occurred in the conversation was positively agonizing to him.

It was like taking the vulture from his

liver, when Swinton spoke again, in a tone that promised *compromise*,

“My lord,” he said, “I feel that I am a dishonoured man. But I’m a poor man, and cannot afford to go to law with your lordship.”

“Why should you, Mr. Swinton?” asked the nobleman, hastily catching at the straw thus thrown out to him. “I assure you it is all a mistake. You have been deceived by appearances. I had my reasons for holding a private conversation with the lady you suspect; and I could not just at the moment think of anywhere else to go.”

It was a poor pretence; and Swinton received it with a sneer. His lordship did not expect otherwise. He was but speaking to give his abused protégé a chance of swallowing the dishonour.

“You’re the last man in the world,” he continued, “with whom I should wish to have

a misunderstanding. I'd do anything to avoid it; and if there be any service I may render you, name it. Can you think of anything I may do?"

"I can, my lord."

"What is it you would wish?"

"A title. Your lordship can bestow it?"

This time the nobleman started right out of his chair, and stood with eyes staring, and lips aghast.

"You are mad, Mr. Swinton!"

"I am not mad, my lord! I mean what I say."

"Why, sir, to procure you a title would create a scandal that might cost me my reputation. The thing's not to be thought of! Such honours are only bestowed upon——"

"Upon those who do just such services as I. All stuff, my lord, to talk of distinguished services to the State. I suppose that's what you were going to say. It may do very well

for the ears of the unwashed; but it has no meaning in mine. If merit were the means of arriving at such distinction, we'd never have heard of such patents of nobility as Lord H——, and the Earl of D——, and Sir E—— T——, and some three-score others I could quote. Why, my lord, it's the very absence of merit that gave these gentlemen the right to be written about by Burke. And look at Burke himself, made 'Sir Bernard' for being but the chronicler of your heraldry. Pretty, pretty service to the State, that is! I'm sure I've as good right as he."

"I don't deny that, Mr. Swinton. But you know it's not a question of right, but expediency."

"So be it, my lord. Mine is just such a case."

"I tell you I dare not do it."

"And I tell you, you dare! Your lordship may do almost anything. The British public

believe you have both the power and the right, even to make the laws of the land. You've taught them to think so; and they know no better. Besides, you are at this moment so popular. They think you perfection!"

"Notwithstanding that," rejoined his lordship, without noticing the sneer, "I dare not do what you wish. What! get you a title! I might as well talk about dethroning the queen, and proclaiming you king in her stead."

"Ha! ha! I don't expect any honour quite so high as that. I don't want it, your lordship. Crowns, they say, make heads uneasy. I'm a man of moderate aspirations. I should be contented with a coronet."

"Madness, Mr. Swinton!"

"Well; if you can't make me a lord like yourself, it's within bounds for me to expect a baronetcy. I'll even be content with simple

knighthood. Surely your lordship can get me that?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the patron, in an agony of vexation. "Is there nothing else you can think of? A post—an office?"

"I'm not fit for either. I don't want them. Nothing less than the title, my lord."

"It's only a title you want?" asked the nobleman, after a pause, and as if suddenly impressed with some idea that promised to serve him. "You say you're not particular? Would that of 'Count' satisfy you?"

"How could your lordship procure that? There are no Counts in England!"

"But there are in France."

"I know it—a good many of them; more than have means to support the titles."

"Never mind the means. The title will secure them to a man of your talents. You may be one of the number. A French count is still a count. Surely that title would suit you?"

Swinton seemed to reflect.

“Perhaps it would. You think your lordship could obtain it for me?”

“I am sure of it. He who has the power to bestow such distinctions is my intimate personal friend. I need not tell you it is France’s ruler.”

“I know it, my lord.”

“Well, Mr. Swinton; say that a French countship will satisfy you, and you shall have it within a week. In less time, if you choose to go to Paris yourself.”

“My lord, I shall be too glad to make the journey.”

“Enough, then. Call upon me to-morrow. I shall have a letter prepared that will introduce you, not only to the Emperor of France, but into the ranks of France’s nobility. Come at ten o’clock.”

It is scarce necessary to say that Swinton was punctual to the appointment; and on

that same day, with a heart full of rejoicing, made the journey from Park Lane to Paris.

Equally delighted was his patron at having secured condonation at such a cheap rate, for what might otherwise have proved not only a costly case but a ruinous scandal.

In less than a week from this time, Swinton crossed the threshold of the South Bank Villa, with a patent of countship in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COUNT DE VALMY.

IF ever Mrs. Girdwood had a surprise in her life, it was when Mr. Swinton called at the Clarendon Hotel, and asked if she and her girls would accept of an invitation to a reception at Lord ——'s.

The entertainment was at the residence in Park Lane.

The storekeeper's widow gave her consent, without consulting her girls; and the invitation came on a sheet of tinted paper, bearing the well-known crest.

Mrs. Girdwood went to the reception, the girls along with her; Julia carrying twenty

thousand dollars' worth of diamonds upon her head and shoulders.

Otherwise they were as well dressed as any British damsel who presented herself in his lordship's drawing rooms; and among these were the noblest in the land.

So far as appearance went, the American ladies had no need to be ashamed of the gentleman who escorted them. Though to them but plain Mr. Swinton, Mrs. Girdwood was subjected to a fresh shock of surprise, when the noble host, coming up to the group, accosted him as "My dear Count," and begged an introduction to his companions.

It was gracefully given; and now for the first time in her life was Mrs. Girdwood certain of being surrounded by true titled aristocracy.

There could be no deception about the people of that party, who were of all ranks known to Burke's British Peerage. Nor

could there be any doubt now, that Mr. Swinton *was* a "somebody."

"A count he is, and no mistake!" was Mrs. Girdwood's muttered soliloquy. "He isn't a lord; he never said he was one. But a count's the same thing, or the next to it.

"Besides, there are counts with great estates—far greater than some lords. Haven't we heard so?"

The question was in a side whisper to Julia, after all three had been introduced to their august entertainer.

Just then Julia had no opportunity of making answer to it, for the noble host, whose guests they were, was so condescending as to chat with her; and continued chatting such a long time, that the Count appeared to be getting jealous of him! As if observing this, his lordship withdrew, to extend a like courtesy to the twenty other

beautiful young damsels who graced the reception,—leaving the Girdwood group to their own and their Count's guidance for the remainder of the evening.

Receptions do not last more than a couple of hours, beginning at ten and breaking up about twelve, with light refreshments of the "kettle-drum" kind, that serve, very unsatisfactorily, for supper.

In consequence, the Count de Valmy (for such was Mr. Swinton's title) invited the ladies to a *petit souper* of a more substantial kind, at one of the snug refectories to be found a little further along Piccadilly.

There, being joined by the other count—met by them at the Mr. Swinton's dinner-table, and who on this occasion was unaccompanied by his countess—they passed a pleasant hour or two, as is usually the case at a *petit souper*.

Even the gentle Cornelia enjoyed herself,

though not through the company of the two counts. She had met a gentleman at the reception—a man old enough to have been her father—but one of those noble natures with which the heart of a young confiding girl readily sympathises. They had chatted together. He had said some words to her, that made her forget the disparity of years, and wish for more of his conversation. She had given consent to his calling on her, and the thought of this hindered her from feeling forsaken; even when the Count de Valmy confined his attention to her cousin, and the married count made himself amiable to her aunt!

The Champagne and Moselle were both of best quality; and Mrs. Girdwood was induced to partake of both freely, as was also her daughter.

The two counts were agreeable companions—but more especially he who had so long passed as Mr. Swinton, and who was



no longer careful about keeping up his incognito.

It ended in Mrs. Girdwood's heart warming towards him with the affection of a mother ; while Julia's became almost softened to that other affection which promised to bestow upon her the title of "countess."

"What could be better, or prettier?" thought she, repeating the words of her willing mother. A stylish countess, with a handsome count for husband—dresses and diamonds, carriages and cash, to make the title illustrious !

Of the last the count himself appeared to have plenty ; but whether or no, her mother had given promise that it should not be wanting.

And what a grand life it would be to give receptions herself—not only in great London, but in the Fifth Avenue, New York !

And then she could go back to Newport

in the height of the fashionable season; and how she could spite the J——'s and the L——'s, and the B——'s; make them envious to the tips of their fingers, by flaunting herself before their faces as the "Countess de Valmy!"

What if she did not love her count to distraction! She would not be the first—not by millions—who had stifled the cherished yearnings of a heart, and strained its tenderest chords, to submit to a marriage *de convenance*!

In this mood Swinton found her, when under *his true and real name* he once more made his proposal.

And she answered it, by consenting to become the Countess de Valmy.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONTEMPLATING A CANAL.

SWINTON'S triumph seemed complete.

He already had a title, which no one could take from him—not even he who had bestowed it.

He possessed both the patent and parchments of nobility; and he intended taking care of them.

But he still wanted fortune; and this seemed now before him.

Julia Girdwood had consented to become his wife, with a dower of £50,000, and the expectation of as many thousands more!

It had been a rare run of luck, or rather a chapter of cunning—subtle as fiendish.

But it was not yet complete. The marriage remained to be solemnized. And when solemnized, what then?

The sequel was still in doubt, and full of darkness. It was darkened by dangers, and fraught with fears.

If Fan should prove untrue? True to herself, but untrue to him? Supposing her to become stirred with an instinct of opposition to this last great dishonour, and forbid the banns? She might act so at the eleventh hour; and then to him, disappointment, disgrace, ruin!

But he had no great fear of this. He felt pretty sure she would continue a consenting party, and permit his nefarious scheme to be consummated. But then? And what then?

She would hold over him a power he had reason to dread—a very sword of Damocles!

He would have to share with her the ill-

gotten booty—he knew her well enough for this—submit to her will in everything, for he knew also that she had a will—now that she was re-established on the ride of Rotten Row as one of its prettiest horse-breakers.

There was something, beside the thought of Fan's reclaiming him, that vexed him far more than the fear of any mulct. He would be willing to bleed black-mail to any amount convenient—even to the half of Julia Girdwood's fortune, to insure his past wife keeping quiet for ever.

Strange to say, he had grown to care little for the money ; though it may not appear strange when the cause is declared.

It will only seem so, considering the character of the man. Wicked as Swinton was, he had fallen madly in love with Julia Girdwood—madly and desperately.

And now on the eve of possessing her, to

hold that possession as by a thread, that might be cut at any moment by caprice.

And that caprice the will of an injured wife! No wonder the wretch saw in his future a thorny entanglement—a path, if bestrewed with flowers, beset also by death’s-heads and skeletons!

Fan had helped him in his scheme for acquiring an almost fabulous fortune; at a touch she could destroy it.

“By heaven! *she shall not!*” was the reflection that came forth from his lips as he stood smoking a cigar, and speculating on the feared future. Assisted in conception by that same cigar, and before it was smoked to a stump, he had contrived a plan to secure him against his wife’s future interference in whatever way it might be exerted.

His scheme of bigamy was scarce guilt, compared with that now begotten in his brain.

He was standing upon the edge of the canal, whose steep bank formed the back enclosure of his garden. The tow-path was on the other side, so that the aqueous chasm yawned almost directly under his feet.

The sight of it was suggestive. He knew it was deep. He saw it was turbid, and not likely to tell tales.

There was a moon coursing through the sky. Her beams, here and there, fell in bright blotches upon the water. They came slanting through the shrubbery, showing that it was a young moon and would soon go down.

It was already dark where he stood, in the shadow of a huge laurustinus; but there was light enough to show that with a fiend's face he was contemplating the canal.

"It would do!" he muttered to himself; "but not *here*. The *thing* might be fished up again. Even if it could be made to appear suicide, there'd be the chance of an identi-

fiction and connection with me. More than chance—a dead, damnable certainty.

“That would be damnable! I should have to appear at a coroner’s quest to explain.

“Bah! what use in speculating? Explanation, under the circumstances, would be simply condemnation.

“Impossible! The thing can’t be done *here!*

“But it *can* be done,” he continued; “and in this canal, too. It *has* been done, no doubt, many a time. Yes, silent sluggard! if you could but speak, you might tell of many a plunge made into your sluggish waves, alike by the living and the dead!

“You will suit for my purpose; but not here. I know the place, the very place: by the Park Road bridge.

“And the time, too—late at night. Some dark night, when the spruce tradesmen of

Wellington Road have gone home to the bosom of their families, and the Park Road policeman is levying black-mail on the pretty ducks who dwell in the Hanover Cottages.

“Why not this very night?” he asked himself, stepping nervously out from the laurustinus, and glaring at the moon, whose thin crescent flickered feebly through cumulous clouds. “Yonder farthing dip will be burnt out within the hour, and if that sky don’t deceive me, we’ll have a night dark as d——n. A fog, too, by heavens!” he added, raising himself on tiptoe, and making survey of the horizon to the east. “Yes! there’s no mistake about that dun cloud coming up from the Isle of Dogs, with the colour of the Thames mud upon it.

“Why not to-night?” he again asked himself, as if by the question to strengthen him in his terrible resolve. “The thing can’t wait. A day may spoil everything. If it is to be

done, the sooner the better. *It must be done!*

“Yes, yes; there’s fog coming over that sky, if I know aught of London weather. It will be on before midnight. God grant it may stay till the morning!”

The prayer passing from his lips, in connection with the horrid scheme in his thoughts, gave an expression to his countenance truly diabolical.

Even his wife, used to see the “ugly” in his face, could not help noticing it, as he went back into the house—where she had been waiting for him to go out for a walk.

It was a walk to the Haymarket, to enjoy the luxuries of a set supper in the Café d’Europe, where the “other count,” with the Honourable Geraldine, and one or two friends of similar social standing, had made appointment to meet them.

It was not the last promenade Swinton intended to take with his beloved Fan. Before reaching the Haymarket, he had planned another for that same night, *if it should prove to be a dark one.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

A PETIT SOUPER.

THE supper was provided by "Kate the coper," who had lately been "in luck;" having netted handsomely on one of her steeds, sold to a young "spoon" she had recently picked up, and who was one of the party.

The "coped" individual was no other than our old friend Frank Scudamore, who by the absence of his cousin abroad, and her benign influence over him, had of late taken to courses of dissipation.

The supper given by Kate was a sort of return to her friend Fan for the dinner at the

M^rTavish villa ; and in sumptuousness was a spread no way inferior.

In point of time it might have been termed a dinner ; for it commenced at the early hour of eight.

This was to give opportunity for a quiet rubber of whist to be played afterward, and in which "Spooney," as she called young Scudamore — though not to his face — was expected to be one of the corners.

There was wine of every variety—each of the choicest to be found in the cellars of the Café d'Europe. Then came the cards, and continued, till Scudamore declared himself cleared out ; and then there was carousal.

The mirth was kept up till the guests had got into that condition jocularly called "How come you so?"

It applied alike to male and female. Fan, the Honourable Geraldine, and two other frail daughters of Eve, having indulged in the

grape juice as freely as their gentlemen fellow-revellers.

At breaking up, but one of the party seemed firm upon his feet. This was the Count de Valmy.

It was not his habit to be hard-headed; but on this occasion he had preserved himself, and for a purpose.

Busy with their own imbibing, nobody noticed him secretly spilling his liquor into the spittoon, while pretending to "drink fair."

If they had, they might have wondered, but could not have guessed why. The fiend himself could not have imagined his foul design in thus dodging the drink.

His gay friends, during the early part of the entertainment, had observed his abstraction. The Honourable Geraldine had rallied him upon it. But in due time all had become so mellow, and merry, that no one

believed any other could be troubled with depression of spirits.

An outside spectator closely scrutinizing the countenance of Mr. Swinton might have seen indications of such, as also on his part an effort to conceal it. His eyes seemed at times to turn inward, as if his thoughts were there, or anywhere except with his roystering companions.

He had even shown neglectful of his cards; although the pigeon to be plucked was his adversary in the game.

Some powerful or painful reflection must have been causing his absent-mindedness; and it seemed a relief to him when, satiated with carousal, the *convives* gave tacit consent to a general *débandade*.

There had been eight of the supper party, and four cabs, called to the entrance-door of the café, received them in assorted couples.

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It was as much as most of them could do to get inside; but aided by a brace of Haymarket policemen, with a like number of waiters out of the hotel, they were at length safely stowed, and the cabs drove off.

Each driver obeyed the direction given him, Scudamore escorting home the Honourable Geraldine, or rather the reverse; while Swinton, in charge of his tipsy wife, gave his cabman the order—

“Up the Park Road to St. John’s Wood.”

It was spoken, not loudly, but in a low muttered voice, which led the man to think they could not be a married couple.

No matter, so long as he had his fare, along with a little perquisite, which the gent looked like giving.

Swinton’s weather prophecy had proved true to a shade. The night was dark as pitch, only of a dun colour on account of the fog.

And this was so thick that late fashionables, riding home in their grand carriages, were preceded each carriage by a pair of linkmen.

Along Piccadilly and all through May Fair torches were glaring through the thick vapour; the tongues of their bearers filling the streets with jargon.

Farther on across Oxford Street there were fewer of them; and beyond Portman Square they ceased to be seen altogether—so that the cab, a four-wheeler, containing the Count de Valmy and his countess, crept slowly along Baker Street, its lamps illuminating a circle of scarce six feet around it.

“It will do,” said Swinton, to himself, craning his neck out of the window, and scrutinizing the night.

He had made this reflection before, as, first of his party, he came out on the steps of the Café d’Europe.

He did not speak it aloud, though, for that

matter, his wife would not have heard him. Not even had he shouted it in her ear. She was asleep in a corner of the cab.

Before this she had been a "little noisy," singing snatches of a song, and trying to repeat the words of an ambiguous *jeu d'esprit* she had heard that evening for the first time.

She was now altogether unconscious of where she was, or in what company—as proved by her occasionally waking up, calling out "Spooney!"—addressing her husband as the *other* count, and sometimes as "Kate the copper!"

Her own count appeared to be unusually careful of her. He took much pains to keep her quiet; but more in making her comfortable. She had on a long cloth cloak of ample dimensions—a sort of night wrapper. This he adjusted over her shoulders, buttoning it close around her throat, that her chest should not be exposed to the fog.

By the time the cab had crawled through Upper Baker Street, and entered the Park Road, Fan had not only become quiet, but was at length sound asleep; her tiny snore alone telling that she lived.

On moved the vehicle through the dun darkness, magnified by the mist to twice its ordinary size, and going slow and silent as a hearse.

"Where?" asked the driver, slewing his body around, and speaking in through the side window.

"South Bank! You needn't go inside the street. Set us down at the end of it, in the Park Road."

"All right," rejoined the Jarvey, though not thinking so. He thought it rather strange that a gent with a lady in such queer condition should desire to be discharged in that street at such an hour, and especially on such a night!

Still it admitted of an explanation, which his experience enabled him to supply. The lady had stayed out a little too late. The gent wished her to get housed without making a noise, and it would not do for cab wheels to be heard drawing up by "the door."

What mattered it to him, cabby, so long as the fare should be forthcoming, and the thing made "square?" He liked it all the better, as promising a perquisite.

In this he was not disappointed. At the corner designated, the gentleman got out, lifting his close-muffled partner in his arms, and holding her upright upon the pavement.

With his spare hand he gave the driver a crown piece, which was more than double his fare.

After such largess, not wishing to appear impertinent, cabby climbed back to his box ; readjusted the manifold drab cape around his shoulders ; tightened his reins ; touched the

screw with his whip; and started back towards the Haymarket, in hopes of picking up another intoxicated fare.

“Hold on to my arm, Fan!” said Swinton to his helpless better-half, as soon as the cabman was out of hearing. “Lean upon me. I’ll keep you up. So! Now, come along!”

Fan made no reply. The alcohol overpowered her—now more than ever. She was too tipsy to talk, even to walk; and her husband had to support her whole weight, almost to drag her along. She was quite unconscious whither.

But Swinton knew.

It was not along South Bank: they had passed the entrance of that quiet thoroughfare, and were proceeding up the Park Road!

And why? He also knew why.

Under the Park Road passes the Regent’s Canal, spanned by the bridge already spoken of. You would only know you were crossing

the canal by observing a break in the shrubbery. This opens westward. On the east side of the road is the park wall rising high overhead, and shadowed by tall trees.

Looking towards Paddington, you see an open list, caused by the canal and its tow-path. The water yawns far below your feet, on both sides draped with evergreens; and foot-passengers along the Park Road are protected from straying over by a parapet scarce breast-high.

Upon this bridge Swinton had arrived. He had stopped and stood close up to the parapet, as if for a rest, his wife still clinging to his arm.

He *was* resting; but not with the intention to proceed farther. He was recovering strength for an effort so hellish, that, had there been light around them, he and his companion would have appeared as a *tableau vivant*—the spectacle of a murderer about to dispatch

his victim! And it would have been a tableau true to the life: for such in reality was his design!

There was no light to shine upon its execution; no eye to see him suddenly let go his wife's arm, draw the wrapper round her neck, so that the clasp came behind; and then, turning it inside out, fling the skirt over her head!

There could be no ear to hear that smothered cry, as, abruptly lifted in his arms, she was pitched over the parapet of the bridge!

Swinton did not even himself stay to hear the plunge. He only heard it, indistinctly blending with the sound of his own footsteps, as with terrified tread he retreated along the Park Road!

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE TOW-ROPE.

WITH difficulty cordelling his barge around the Regent's Park, Bill Bootle, the canal-boatman, was making slow speed.

This because the fog had thickened unexpectedly ; and it was no easy matter to guide his old horse along the tow-path.

He would not have attempted it ; but that he was next morning due in the Paddington Basin ; where at an early hour the owner of the boat would be expecting him.

Bill was only skipper of the craft ; the crew consisting of his wife, and a brace of young Bootles, one of them still at the breast.

Mrs. B., wearing her husband's dread-

nought to protect her from the raw air of the night, stood by the tiller, while Bootle himself had charge of the tow-horse.

He had passed through the Park Road Bridge, and was groping his way beyond, when a drift of the fog thicker than common came curling along the canal, compelling him to make stop.

The boat was still under the bridge ; and Mrs. Bootle, feeling that the motion was suspended, had ceased working the spokes. Just at this moment, both she and her husband heard a shuffling sound upon the bridge above them ; which was quick followed by a "swish," as of some bulky object descending through the air !

There was also a voice ; but so smothered as to be almost inaudible !

Before either had time to think of it, a mass came plashing down upon the water, between the boat and the horse !

It had struck the tow-rope ; and with such force, that the old machiner, tired after a long spell of pulling, was almost dragged backwards into the canal !

And frightened by the sudden jerk, it was as much as Bootle could do to prevent him rushing forward, and going in head foremost !

The difficulty in tranquillizing the horse lay in the fact that the tow-rope was still kept taut, by some one who appeared to be struggling upon it, and whose smothered cries could be heard coming up from the disturbed surface of the water !

The voice was not so choked, but that Bootle could tell it to be that of a woman !

The boatman's chivalrous instincts were at once aroused ; and, dropping the rein, he ran back a bit, and then sprang with a plunge into the canal.

It was so dark he could see nothing ; but the half-stifled cries served to guide him ; and

swimming towards the tow-rope, he discovered the object of his search!

It was a woman struggling in the water, and still upon its surface.

She was prevented from sinking by her cloak, which had swished over on one side of the tow-rope as her body fell upon the other.

Moreover she had caught the rope in her hands, and was holding on to it with the tenacious grasp of one who dreads drowning.

The boatman could not see her face, which appeared to be buried within the folds of a cloak!

He did not stay to look for a face. Enough for him that there was a body, in danger of being drowned; and, throwing one arm around it, with the other he commenced "swarming" along the tow-rope in the direction of the barge!

Mrs. B——, who had long since forsaken

the tiller, and was now "for'ard," helped him and his burden aboard; which, examined by the light of the canal-boat lantern, proved to be a very beautiful lady, dressed in rich silk, with a gold watch in her waistbelt, and a diamond ring sparkling upon her fingers!

Mrs. Bootle observed that beside this last, there was another ring of plain appearance, but in her eyes of equal significance. It was the hoop emblematic of Hymen.

These things were only discovered after the saturated cloak had been removed from the shoulders of the half-drowned woman; and who, but for it and the tow-rope, would have been drowned altogether.

"What is this?" asked the lady, gasping for breath, and looking wildly around. "What is it, Dick? Where are you? Where am I? O God! It is water! I'm wet all over. It has nearly suffocated me! Who are you, sir? And you, woman; if you are a woman? Why

did you throw me in? Is it the river, or the Serpentine, or where?"

"Taint no river, mistress," said Mrs. Bootle, a little nettled by the doubt thrown upon her womanhood, "nor the Sarpentine neyther. It's the Ragent Canal. But who ha' pitched you into it, ye ought best to know that yourself."

"The Regent's Canal?"

"Yes, missus," said Bootle, taking the title from his wife; "it's there you've had your duckin',—just by the Park Road here. You come switching over the bridge. Can't you tell who chucked you over? Or did ye do it yerself?"

The eyes of the rescued woman assumed a wandering expression, as if her thoughts were straying back to some past scene.

Then all at once a change came over her countenance, like one awaking from a horrid dream, and not altogether comprehending the reality!

For a moment she remained as if considering; and then all became clear to her.

“You have saved me from drowning,” she said, leaning forward, and grasping the boatman by the wrist.

“Well, yes: I reckon you’d a goed to the bottom, but for me, an’ the old tòw-rope.”

“By the Park Road bridge, you say?”

“It be right over ye: the boat’s still under it.”

Another second or two spent in reflection, and the lady again said:

“Can I trust you to keep this a secret?”

Bootle looked at his wife, and Mrs. B. back at her husband, both inquiringly.

“I have reasons for asking this favour,” continued the lady, in a trembling tone, which was due not altogether to the ducking. “It’s no use telling you what they are—not now. In time I may make them known to you. Say you will keep it a secret?”

Again Bootle looked interrogatively at his wife; and again Mrs. B. gave back the glance.

But this time an answer was secured in the affirmative, through an act done by the rescued lady.

Drawing the diamond ring off her finger, and taking the gold watch from behind her waistbelt, she handed the first to the boatman's wife, and the second to the boatman himself—telling both to keep them as tokens of gratitude for the saving of her life!

The gifts appeared sufficiently valuable, not only to cover the service done, but that requested. With such glittering bribes in hand, it would have been a strange boatman, and still stranger boatman's wife, who would have refused to keep a secret, which could scarce compromise them.

"One last request," said the lady. "Let me stay aboard your boat till you can land

me in Lisson Grove? You are going that way?"

"We are, missus."

"You will then call a cab for me from the stand? •There's one in the Grove Road, close by."

"I'll do that for your ladyship in welcome."

"Enough, sir: I hope some day to have an opportunity of showing you I can be grateful."

Bootle, still balancing the watch in his hand, thought she had shown this already.

Some of the service still remained to be done, and should be done quickly. Leaving the lady with his wife, Bootle sprang back upon the tow-path, and once more taking his old horse by the head, trained on towards the Grove Road.

Nearing its bridge, which terminates the long subterraneous passage to Edgware Road,

he again brought his barge to a stop, and went in search of a cab.

He soon came back with a four-wheeler; conducted the dripping lady into it; said good-night to her; and then returned to his craft.

But not till she he had rescued had taken note of his name, the number of his boat, and every particular that might be necessary to the finding him again!

She did not tell him whither she was herself bound.

She only communicated this to the cabman; who was directed to drive her to a hotel, not far from the Haymarket.

She was now sober enough to know, not only where she was, but whither she was going!

CHAPTER XXV.

CONSENT AT LAST.

SINCE our last visit to it, Vernon Hall had changed from gay to grave.

Only in its interior. Outside, its fine façade presented the same cheerful front to its park ; the Corinthian columns of its portico looked open and hospitable as ever.

As ever, elegant equipages came and went ; but only to draw up, and remain for a moment in the sweep, while their occupants left cards, and made inquiries.

Inside there was silence. Servants glided about softly, or on tiptoe ; opened and closed the doors gently, speaking in subdued tones.

It was a stillness, solemn and significant. It spoke of sickness in the house.

And there was ; sickness of the most serious kind : for it was known to be the precursor of death.

Sir George Vernon was dying.

It was an old malady—a disease of that organ, to which tropical climes are so fatal—in the East as in the West.

And in both had the baronet been exposed : for part of his earlier life had been spent in India.

Induration had been long going on. It was complete, and pronounced incurable. At the invalid's urgent request, the doctors had told him the truth—warning him to prepare for death.

His last tour upon the Continent—whither he had gone with his daughter—had given the finishing blow to his strength ; and he was now home again, so enfeebled that he

could no longer take a walk, even along the soft, smooth turf of his own beautiful park.

By day most of his time was spent upon a sofa in his library, where he lay supported by pillows.

He had gone abroad with Blanche, in the hope of weaning her from that affection so freely confessed; and which had been ever since a sore trouble to his spirit.

How far he had succeeded might be learnt by looking in her sad thoughtful face, once blithe and cheerful; by noting a pallor in her cheek, erst red as the rose leaf; by listening to sighs, too painful to be suppressed; and, above all, to a conversation that occurred between her and her father not long after returning from that latest journey, that was to be the last of his life.

Sir George was in his library reclining, as was his wont. The sofa had been wheeled up to the window, that he might enjoy the

charm of a splendid sunset: for it was a window facing west.

Blanche was beside him; though no words were passing between them. Having finished adjusting his pillow, she had taken a seat near the foot of the sofa, her eyes, like his, fixed on the far sunset—flushing the horizon with strata-clouds of crimson, purple, and gold.

It was mid-winter; but among the sheltered copses of Vernon Park there was slight sign of the season. With a shrubbery whose foliage never fell, and a grass ever green, the grounds immediately around the mansion might have passed for a picture of spring.

And there was bird music, the spring's fit concomitant: the chaffinch chattering upon the taller trees, the blackbird with flute-like note fluttering low among laurels and laurustines, and the robin nearer the window warbling his sweet simple lay.

Here and there a bright-plumed pheasant

might be seen shooting from copse to copse or a hare, scared from her form, dashing down into the covert of the dale. Further off on the pastures of the park could be seen sleek kine consorting with the antlered stag, both browsing tranquil and undisturbed. It was a fair prospect to look upon ; and it should have been fairer in the eyes of one who was its proprietor.

But not so Sir George Vernon, who might fancy that he was looking at it for the last time. The thought could not fail to inspire painful reflections ; and into a train of such had he fallen.

They took the shape of an inquiry : what was to succeed him in that fair inheritance handed down from a long line of distinguished ancestors ?

His daughter Blanche was to be his inheritor : since he had no son, no other child ; and the entail of the estate ended with himself

But Blanche might not long bear his name; and what other was she to bear? What escutcheon was to become quartered upon that of the Vernons?

He thought of Scudamore; he had been long thinking of it, hoping, wishing it; but now, in the hours darkened by approaching death, he had doubts whether this union of armorial bearings would ever be.

In earlier days he had resolved on its being so, and up to a late period. He had spoken of compulsion, such as he held by testamentary powers. He had even hinted it to Blanche herself. He had made discovery how idle such a course would be: and on this he was now reflecting. He might as well have thought of commanding yonder sun to cease from its setting, yonder stag to lay aside its grandeur, or the birds their soft beauty. You may soften an antipathy, but you cannot kill it; and, obedient child though she was, not even

her father's will, not all the powers upon earth, could have removed from Blanche Vernon's mind the antipathy she had conceived for her cousin Scudamore.

In the same way you may thwart an affection, but not destroy it; and a similar influence would not have sufficed to chase from Blanche Vernon's mind the memory of Captain Maynard. His image was still upon her heart, fresh as the first impression—fresh as in that hour when she stood holding his hand under the shade of the *deodara*!

Her father appeared to know all this. I do not, her pale cheek, day by day growing paler, should have admonished him. But he did know, or suspected it: and the time had come for him to be certain.

"Blanche!" he said, turning round, and tenderly gazing in her face.

"Father?"

She pronounced the word interrogatively.

thinking it was some request for service to the invalid. But she started as she met his glance. It meant something more!

“ My daughter,” he said, “ I shall not be much longer with you.”

“ Dear father ! do not say so !”

“ It is true, Blanche. The doctors tell me I am dying ; and I know it myself.”

“ O father ! dear father !” she exclaimed, springing forward from her seat, falling upon her knees beside the sofa, and covering his face with her tresses and tears.

“ Do not weep, my child ! However painful to think of it, these things must be. It is the fate of all to leave this world ; and I could not hope to be exempted. It is but going to a better, where God himself will be with us, and where we are told there is no more weeping. Come, child ! compose yourself. Return to your seat, and listen : for I have something to say to you.”

Sobbingly she obeyed—sobbing as though her heart would break!

“When I’m gone,” he continued, after she had become a little calmer, “you, my daughter, will succeed to my estates. They are not of great value; for I regret to say there is a considerable mortgage upon them. Still, after all is paid off, there will be a residue—sufficient for your maintenance in the position to which you have been accustomed.”

“Oh, father! do not speak of these things. It pains me!”

“But I must, Blanche; I must. It is necessary you should be made acquainted with them; and necessary, too, that *I* should know——”

What was it necessary he should know. He had paused, as if afraid to declare it.

“What, papa?” asked she, looking inter

rogatively in his face, at the same time that a blush, rising upon her cheek, told she half divined it.

“What should you know?”

“My dear daughter!” he rejoined, shunning a direct answer. “It is but reasonable to suppose you will be some day changing your name. I should be unhappy to leave the world, thinking you would not; and I could leave it all the happier, to think you will change it for one worthy of being adopted by the daughter of a Vernon—one borne by a man deserving to be my son!”

“Dear father!” cried she, once more sobbing spasmodically; “pray do not speak to me of this! I know whom you mean. Yes; I know it, I know it. O, father, it can never be!”

She was thinking of the name Scudamore; and that it could never be hers!

“Perhaps you are mistaken, my child.

Perhaps I did not mean any name in particular."

Her grand blue eyes, deeper blue under their bedewing of tears, turned inquiringly upon her father's face.

She said nothing; but seemed waiting for him to further explain himself.

"My daughter," he said, "I think I can guess what you meant by your last speech. You object to the name Scudamore? Is it not so?"

"Sooner than bear it, I shall be for ever content to keep my own—yours—throughout all my life. Dear father! I shall do anything to obey you—even this. Oh! you will not compel me to an act that would make me for ever unhappy? I do not, cannot love Frank Scudamore; and without love how could I—how could he——"

The womanly instinct which had been guiding the young girl seemed suddenly to

forsake her. The interrogatory ended in a convulsive sob; and once more she was weeping.

Sir George could no longer restrain his tears, nor expression of the sympathy from whence they proceeded.

Averting his face upon the pillow, he wept wildly as she.

Sorrow cannot endure for ever. The purest and most poignant grief must in time come to an end.

And the dying man knew of a solace, not only to himself, but to his dear, noble daughter—dearer and nobler from the sacrifice she had declared herself willing to make for him.

His views about her future had been for some time undergoing a change. The gloom of the grave, to one who knows he is hastening towards it, casts its shadow alike over the pride of the past, and the splendours of the

present. Equally does it temper the ambitions of the future.

And so had it affected the views of Sir George Vernon—socially as well as politically. Perhaps he saw in that future the dawning of a new day—when the *régime* of the Republic will be the only one acknowledged upon Earth!

Whether or not, there was in his mind at that moment a man who represented this idea; a man he had once slighted, even to scorn. On his death-bed he felt scorn no longer; partly because he had repented of it, and partly that he knew this man was in the mind of his daughter—in her heart of hearts. And he knew also, she would never be happy without having him in her arms!

She had promised a self-sacrifice—nobly promised it. A command, a request, a simple word would secure it!

Was he to speak that word?

No! Let the crest of the Vernons be erased from the page of heraldry? Let it be blended with the plebeian insignia of a republic, rather than a daughter of his house, his own dear child, should be the child of a life-long sorrow!

In that critical hour, he determined she should not.

"You do not love Frank Scudamore?" he said, after the long sad interlude, recurring to her last speech.

"I do not, father; I cannot!"

"But you love another? Do not fear to speak frankly—candidly, my child! You love another?"

"I do—I do!"

"And that other is—Captain Maynard?"

"Father! I have once before confessed it. I told you I loved him, with my whole heart's affection. Do you think that could ever change?"

"Enough, my brave Blanche!" exclaimed the invalid, raising his head proudly upon the pillow, and contemplating his daughter, as if in admiration. "Enough! dearest Blanche! Come to my arms! Come closer and embrace your father—your friend, who will not be much longer near you. It will be no fault of mine, if I do not leave you in other arms—if not dearer, perhaps better able to protect you!"

The wild burst of filial affection bestowed upon a dying parent permits not expression in speech.

Never was one wilder, than when Blanche Vernon flung her arms around the neck of her generous parent, and showered her scalding tears upon his cheek!

CHAPTER XXVI.

A CONSOLING EPISTLE.

“ NEVER more to see her—never more to hear of her! From her I need not expect. She dares not write. No doubt an embargo has been laid upon that. Parental authority forbids it!

“ And I dare not write to her! If I did, no doubt, by the same parental authority, my epistle would be intercepted—still further compromising her — still further debarring the chance of a reconciliation with her father!

“ I dare not do it—I should not!

“ Why should I not? Is it not after all but a false sentiment of chivalry?

“And am I *not* false to myself—to her? What authority over the heart is higher than its own inclining? In the disposal of the hand, this, and this alone, should be consulted. Who has the right to interpose between two hearts mutually loving? To forbid their mutual happiness?

“The parent claims such right, and too often exercises it! It may be a wise control; but is it a just one?

“And there are times, too, when it may not be wisdom, but madness.

“O, pride of rank! how much happiness has been left unachieved through thy interference—how many hearts sacrificed on the shrine of thy hollow pretensions!

“Blanche! Blanche! It is hard to think there is a barrier between us, that can never be broken down! An obstruction that no merit of mine, no struggle, no triumph, no probation, can remove! It is hard! hard!

“And even should I succeed in achieving such triumph, it might be too late? The heart I have now, might then be another’s!

“Ah! *it may be another’s now!* Who knows that it is not?”

It was Captain Maynard who made these reflections. He was in his own studio, and seated in his writing-chair. But the last thought was too painful for him to remain seated; and, springing to his feet, he commenced pacing the floor.

That sweet presentiment was no more in his mind—at least not strongly. The tone and tenour of his soliloquy, especially its last clause, told how much he had lost belief in it. And his manner, as he strode through the room—his glances, gestures, and exclamations—the look of despair, and the long-drawn sigh—told how much Blanche Vernon was in his mind—how much he still loved her!

“It is true,” he continued, “she may by

this have forgotten me ! A child, she may have taken me up as a toy—no more to be thought of when out of sight ! Damaged too ; for doubtless they've done everything to defame me !

“Oh ! that I could believe that promise, made at the hour of our parting—recorded, too, in writing ! Let me look once more at the sweet chirograph !”

Thrusting his hand into the pocket of his vest—the one directly over his heart—he drew forth the tiny sheet, there long and fondly treasured.

Spreading it out, he once more read :—

“ Papa is very angry ; and I know he will never sanction my seeing you again. I am sad to think we may meet no more ; and that you will forget me. I shall never forget you, never—never.”

The reading caused him a strange comingling of pain and pleasure, as it had done

twenty times before: for not less than twenty times had he deciphered that hastily-scribbled note!

But now the pain predominated over the pleasure. He had begun to believe in the emphatic clause "we may never meet more," and to doubt the declaration "I shall never forget you." He continued to pace the floor wildly, despairingly.

It did not do much to tranquillize him, when his friend, Roseveldt, entered the room, in the making of a morning call. It was an occurrence too common, to create any distraction—especially from such thoughts. And the count had become changed of late. He, too, had a sorrow of a similar kind—a sweet-heart, about the consent of whose guardian there was a question.

In such matters men may give sympathy, but not consolation. It is only the successful who can speak encouragement.

Roseveltdt did not stay long, nor was he communicative.

Maynard did not know the object of his late-sprung passion—not even her name! He only thought it must be some rare damsel who could have caused such a transformation in his friend: a man so indifferent to the fair sex as to have often declared his determination of dying a bachelor!

The count took his leave in a great hurry; but not before giving a hint as to the why. Maynard noticed that he was dressed with unusual care—his moustache pomaded, his hair perfumed!

He confessed to the motive for all this: he was on the way to make a call upon a lady. Furthermore, he designed asking her a question.

He did not say what; but left his old comrade under the impression that it was *the proposal*.

The interlude was not without suggestions of a ludicrous nature, that for a time won Maynard from his painful imaginings.

Only for a short time. They soon returned to him ; and once more stooping down, he re-read Blanche Vernon's note that had been left lying upon the table.

Just as he had finished, a startling knock at the door—the well-known “ra-ta” proclaimed the postman.

“A letter, sir,” said the lodging-house servant, soon after entering the room.

There was no need for a parley ; the postage was paid ; and Maynard took the letter.

The superscription was in the handwriting of a gentleman. It was new to him. There was nothing strange in that. An author fast rising into fame, he was receiving such every day.

But he started, on turning the envelope, to tear it open. There was a crest upon it he

at once recognised. It was the crest of the Vernons!

Not rudely now was the cream-laid covering displaced, but carefully, and with hesitating hand.

And with fingers that shook like aspen leaves, did he spread out the contained sheet, also carrying the crest.

They became steadier as he read :—

“SIR,

“*Your last words to me were :—‘I HOPE THE TIME MAY COME WHEN YOU WILL LOOK LESS SEVERELY ON MY CONDUCT!’ Mine to you, if I remember aright, were ‘NOT LIKELY!’*

“Older than yourself, I deemed myself wiser. But the oldest and wisest may be at times mistaken. I do not deem it a humiliation to confess that I have been so, and about yourself. And, sir, if you do not think it such to forgive my abrupt—I should rather say barbarous—beha-

viour, it would rejoice me once more to welcome you as my guest. Captain Maynard! I am much changed since you last saw me—in the pride both of spirit and person. I am upon my death-bed; and wish to see you before parting from the world.

“There is one by my side, watching over me, who wishes it too. You will come!”

“GEORGE VERNON.”

In the afternoon train of that same day, from London to Tunbridge Wells, there travelled a passenger, who had booked himself for Sevenoaks, Kent.

He was a gentleman of the name of *Maynard!*

CHAPTER XXVII.

BOTH PRE-ENGAGED.

SCARCE a week had elapsed since that somewhat lugubrious interview between Count Roseveldt and Captain Maynard in the room of the latter, when the two men once more met in the same apartment.

This time under changed circumstances, as indicated in the countenances of both.

Both seemed as jolly and joyous, as if all Europe had become republican!

And not only seemed it, but were so; for both of them had reason.

The count had come in. The captain was just going out.

"What luck!" cried the latter. "I was starting in search of you!"

"And I've come in search of you! Captain, I might have missed you! I wouldn't for fifty pounds."

"I wouldn't have missed you for a hundred, count! I want you in a most important matter."

"I want you in one more important."

"You've been quarrelling, count? I'm sorry for it. I'm afraid I shall not be able to serve you."

"Reserve your regrets for yourself. It's more like you to be getting into a scrape of that kind. *Pardieu!* I suppose you're in one?"

"Quite the reverse! At all events, if I'm in a scrape, as you call it, it's one of a more genial nature. I'm going to be married."

"*Mein gott!* so am I!"

"She's consented, then?"

"She has. And yours? I needn't ask

who it is. It's the yellow-haired child, I suppose?"

"I once told you, count, *that child would yet be my wife*. I have now the felicity to tell you *she will*."

"*Mère de Dieu!* it is wonderful. I shall henceforth believe in presentiments. I had the same when I first saw *her!*"

"*Her?* You mean the future Countess de Roseveldt? You have not told me who is destined for the honour?"

"I tell you now, *cher capitaine*, that she is the prettiest, dearest, sweetest, little pet you ever set eyes on. She'll give you a surprise when you do. But you shan't have it till you're introduced to her right in front of the altar; where you must go with me. I've come to bespeak you for that purpose."

"How very odd! It was for that I was going to you."

"To engage me for groomsman?"

"Of course; you once consented to be my second. I know you won't refuse me now?"

"It would be ungrateful if I did—requiring from you a similar service. I suppose you consent to reciprocate?"

"By all means. You may count upon me."

"And you upon me. But when are you to be 'turned off,' as these Britishers term it?"

"Next Thursday, at eleven o'clock."

"Thursday at eleven o'clock!" repeated the count in surprise. "Why, that's the very day and hour I am myself to be made a Benedict of! *Sacre Dieu!* We'll both be engaged in the same business then at the same time! We won't be able to assist one another!"

"A strange coincidence!" remarked Maynard; "very awkward too!"

"*Peste!* isn't it? What a pity we couldn't pull together!"

Of the hundreds of churches contained in the great city of London, it never occurred to either, that they might be married in the same.

“What’s to be done, *cher capitaine*?” asked the Austrian. “I’m a stranger here, and don’t know a soul—that is, enough for this! And you—although speaking the language—appear to be not much better befriended! What’s to be done for both of us?”

Maynard was amused at the count’s perplexity. Stranger as he was, he had no fears for himself. In the great world of London he knew of more than one who would be willing to act as his groomsman—especially with a baronet’s daughter for the bride!

“Stay!” cried Roseveldt, after reflecting. “I have it! There’s Count Ladislaus Teleky. He’ll do for me. And there’s—there’s his cousin, Count Francis! Why shouldn’t he

stand up for you? I know you are friends. I've seen you together."

"Quite true," said Maynard, remembering. "Though I didn't think of him, Count Francis is the very man. I know he'll consent to see me bestowed. It's not ten days since I assisted in making him a citizen of this proud British Empire—in order that he might do as I intend doing—marry a lady who ranks among the proudest of its aristocracy. Thank you, my dear count, for suggesting him. He is in every way suitable; and I shall avail myself of his services."

The two parted; one to seek Count Ladislaus Teleky, the other Francis, to stand sponsors for them in that ceremony of pleasant anticipation—the most important either had ever gone through in his life.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MEET AT CHURCH.

FOR Maynard a happy morn !

It was that of the day on which Blanche Vernon was to become his bride !

His presentiment was upon the point of being fulfilled : the *child* was to be his *wife* !

Not by abduction ; not by clandestine marriage ; but openly, in the face of the world, and with the consent of her father !

Sir George had conceded—arranged everything—even to the details of the marriage ceremony.

It was to be soon—at once.

Before dying, he desired to see his daughter bestowed and under protection.

If he had not chosen the arms that were to protect her, he no longer opposed her choice.

He had now sanctified it by a free formal approval. His future son-in-law was no more a stranger-guest in the mansion at Sevenoaks, Kent.

The nuptials were not to be celebrated there. Not that Sir George would have felt any shame in such celebration ; but because he did not deem it opportune.

He knew that ere long sable plumes would be seen waving there, with a black hatchment upon the wall. He wished not that these funereal emblems should so soon fling their blighting shadow over the orange blossoms of the bridal.

It could be conveniently avoided. He had a sister living in Kensington Gore ; and from her house his daughter could be married.

Besides, the old parish church of Kensington was that before whose altar he had himself stood, some twenty years ago, with Blanche's mother by his side.

The arrangement would be altogether appropriate.

It was determined upon ; and Captain Maynard was requested to present himself upon a certain day, at a certain hour, in the church of St. Mary's, Kensington.

He came, accompanied by Count Francis Teleky ; and there met his bride attended by her maids.

They were not many, for Blanche had expressed a desire to shun ostentation. She only wanted to be wed, to the man who had won her heart !

But few as were her veiled companions, they were among the noblest of the land, each of them bearing a title.

And they were of its loveliest too : every

one of them entitled to the appellation of "belle."

The bridegroom saw them not. Having saluted each with a simple bow, his eyes became bent upon his bride; and there stayed they.

No colours blend more harmoniously than those of the sunbeam and the rose. Over none drapes the bridal veil more becomingly.

Blanche Vernon needed not to blush. She had colour enough without that.

But as her gaze met his, and his voice, like the challenge to some beleaguered citadel, seemed to sound the death-knell of her maiden days, she felt a strange sweet trembling in her heart, while the tint deepened upon her cheeks.

She was but too happy to surrender!

Never in Maynard's eyes had she looked so lovely. He stood as if spell-bound, gazing

upon her beauty, with but one thought in his mind—a longing to embrace her!

It was not pleasant to have this thought interrupted, as it was, by the verger touching him on the arm and whispering a summons to repair to the vestry. And there, too, irksome was the task of making those abominable entries, about age, name, country, and calling; so much out of keeping with the place and the time: repulsive to the spirit of both!

But the incongruity had to be endured. However uncongenial in Hymen's court, it was required by the laws of the land.

Having passed through the probation, the bridegroom, leaning upon Count Teleky's arm, returned to the body of the church; and there taking stand awaited the request to step up to the altar.

A little apart stood the party of the bride.

He who has worshipped only in churches

of modern structure can have but little idea of the interior of one such as that of St. Mary's, Kensington. Its deep pews and heavy overhanging galleries, its shadowy aisles flanked by pillars and pilasters, make it the type of the sacred antique; and on Maynard's mind it produced this impression.

And he thought of the thousands of thousands who had worshipped within its walls, of knights and noble dames, who had knelt before its altar, and whose escutcheons were recorded in the stained glass of its windows, as in brass palimpsests set in the flags beneath his feet! How suggestive these records of high chivalric thought, penetrating the far past, and flinging their mystic influence over the present!

It was upon Maynard, as he stood regarding them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CLIMAX OF A CRIMINAL SCHEME.

DESPITE the archæological attractions of St. Mary's Church the bridegroom began to grow impatient. With such a bride before him, no wonder he wished quick conduct to the altar!

And there was reason too, on account of the long detention. At such a crisis, the shortest delay was difficult to be endured.

It mattered but little that he knew the cause : for he did know it.

Summoned at eleven o'clock, he had been there at the appointed time ; but to find that he and his bride were not the only couple to

be made happy on that same day, and at the same hour !

There was a party that had precedence of his !

On first coming into the church, he had seen signs of it : women in white dresses and drooping veils, with flower fillets upon their hair !

He had only glanced at them in passing. His own bride was not among them ; and his eyes were only for her !

While registering his name in the vestry, he had learned incidentally, that not one, but two couples were to be married before him, both together ! He was told that the parties were friends.

This information was imparted by the officiating curate ; who, after giving it, hurried off to perform the ceremony of making four hearts happy at one and the same time.

As Maynard and his groomsman returned

into the church, they saw standing before the altar, in crescent shape, a row of ladies and gentlemen. There were in all eight of them—two brides, two bridegrooms, with a like number of “maids” and “men.”

It was only after again saluting his own bride, and feasting his eyes upon her beauty, that it occurred to him to take a look at those whose happiness was by some ten minutes to take precedence of his.

His first glance caused him a singular impression. It was almost ludicrous from the coincidence that declared itself.

Count Roseveldt was standing before the shrine, with Ladislaus Teleky by his side, at the same instant recognised by the man at Maynard's side—his cousin!

But who was the lady on Roseveldt's left, holding him by the hand? *Cornelia Inskip!*

Another coincidence; still another was in

store for him; equally strange and far more startling!

Following the crescent curvature, he scrutinized the couple on Count Roseveldt's right. They were the other two standing up to be married.

It was with difficulty he could restrain an ejaculation, on recognizing Julia Girdwood as the bride, and Richard Swinton the bridegroom!

With an effort he controlled himself. It was no business of his; and he only made the muttered remark:—"Poor girl! there's something noble about her. What a pity she should throw herself away on such a scamp as Dick Swinton!"

Maynard knew only *some* of Dick Swinton's antecedents. He had no suspicion that the ex-guardsman was at that moment in the act of committing *bigamy*!

It had not yet reached fulfilment. It was

upon the verge of it. As Maynard stood in speechless contemplation, the clergyman came to that solemn question, proceeding from his lips in the form of a demand :—

“ I require and charge of you in the . . . if either of you know any impediment why you may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony ye do now confess it.”

There was the usual interval of silence, but not so long as is usual.

It was shortened by a response, a thing altogether unusual! This came not from bride or bridegroom, but a third party who suddenly appeared upon the scene!

A woman, young and beautiful, well-dressed, but with a wild look in her eye, and anger in her every movement, shot out from behind one of the supporting columns, and hastily approached the altar!

She was followed by two men, who appeared to act under her orders.

"If they don't know any impediment, I do," cried she; "one that will hinder them from being joined in matrimony. I mean these two!" she added, pointing to Swinton and Julia!

"On what ground do you interfere?" gasped the clergyman, as soon as he had recovered from the shock of surprise. "Speak, woman!"

"On the ground that this man is married already. He is my husband, and would have been my *murderer*, but for—— Here men!" she commanded, dropping the explanatory tone as she turned to the two plain-clothes policemen who attended her. "Take this gentleman in charge, and see that you keep him in safe custody. This is your warrant."

The two representatives of the executive did not stay to examine the piece of stamped paper. They were already acquainted with its character; and before the bigamous bride-

groom could speak a word of protest, their horny hands were laid upon his shoulder, ready, at resistance, to clutch him by the collar!

He made none—not even a show of it. He looked like a man suddenly thunderstruck—trembling from head to foot; and, so trembling, he was conducted out of the church!

It is not in the power of the pen to describe the scene he had so unwillingly forsaken. The tableau, of which he had formed part, was broken up by his involuntary departure. It became transformed into a crowd—a confusion of talking men and shrieking women.

Julia Girdwood was not among them. At the first interruption of the ceremony, by that excited intruder, she had comprehended all. Some instinct seemed to warn her of her woe; and guided by it, she glided out of the church and took solitary shelter in a carriage that

was to have borne her home a bride, with a husband by her side!

A new tableau, with characters all changed, was soon after formed in front of the altar.

It was not disturbed, till after Captain Maynard had placed the ring on Blanche Vernon's finger, saluted her as his wedded wife, and listened to the prayer that sanctified their union!

Then there was a hand-shaking all round, a kissing on the part of pretty bridesmaids, a rustling of silk dresses as they filed out of the church, a getting into grand carriages, and then off to the aunt's residence in Kensington Gore!

That same evening a gentleman travelled to Tunbridge Wells, with a lady by his side, on whose finger glittered a plain gold ring newly placed there. It was not lonely for them, having a whole carriage to themselves. They were the most contented couple in the train!

CHAPTER XXX.

STILL LATER!

WITH mingled emotions do we bring our tale to a close. Some of its scenes may have given pain; while others, it is to be hoped, have been suggestive of pleasure.

And with like mingled emotions, must we part from its conspicuous characters: leaving some with regret, others with gladness.

There are those of them whose after fate cannot fail to cause pain. Perhaps more than all that of Julia Girdwood.

It is told in three words: a disgust with all mankind—a determination never to marry—and its consequence, a life of old maid-hood!

She still lives it, and who knows that she may not like it? If not now, when her mother takes departure from the world, leaving her to the enjoyment of a million dollars.

But Mrs. Girdwood has not done so yet; and says she don't intend to, for a score of years to come!

She would herself get married, but for that crooked clause in the deceased storekeeper's will, which is all-powerful to prevent her!

"Poor Fan Swinton!"

So a moralist might have said, who saw her, six months after, driving through the Park, with a parasol upon her whip, and a pair of high-steppers in the traces—both whip and steppers paid for by one who is not her husband.

Perhaps there were but few moralists in the Park, to make the reflection!

"And poor Dick Swinton!"

There were still fewer to say that, as the ex-guardswoman stood in the dock of a criminal court charged not only with an attempt at bigamy, but murder!

Fewer still, after both charges had been proved; and with hair close cropped he took forced departure for a far-distant land!

The "other count" went in the same ship with him, into a like involuntary exile, and from causes somewhat similar!

And the Honourable Geraldine Courtney in time followed *suite*: she losing her luxuriant tresses, for having changed from the profession of "horse coper" to the less reputable calling of coiner!

She had a long "innings," however, before it came to that: time enough to bring to ruin more than one young swell—among others Frank Scudamore, the "spooney" of the Haymarket supper.

Sir Robert Cottrell still lives; and still

continues to make grand conquests, at the cheapest possible price.

And alive, too, are Messrs. Lucas and Spiller, both returned to America from their European tour, and both yet bachelors.

The former may be seen any day, sauntering along the streets of New York, and frequently flitting around that Fifth Avenue House, where dwells the disconsolate Julia.

Notwithstanding repeated repulses, he has not lost hope of consoling her, by effecting a change in her name!

His shadow, Spiller, is not so much seen along with him—at least upon the flags of the Fifth Avenue.

Cornelia Inskip, the star that should have attracted him thither, is no longer there. The daughter of the Poughkeepsie retailer has long since changed, not only her name, but place of abode. She can be found in the

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Cornelia Inskip, the star that should have attracted him thither, is no longer there. The daughter of the Poughkeepsie retailer has long since changed, not only her name, but place of abode. She can be found in the

capital of Austria, by any one inquiring for the Countess von Roseveldt.

More fortunate than her ambitious cousin, who sought a title, without finding it, Cornelia found one without seeking it!

It seems like dealing out dramatic justice, but the story is true.

Not much of a tragedy, since we have but one death to record. That, too, expected, though painful.

Sir George Vernon died ; but not till after having seen his daughter married to the man of her choice, and given his blessing both to the *Child Wife*, and her chosen husband.

It has long made them happy in their English home ; and, now, in a far foreign land—the land where they first saw one another—that blessing still clings to them.

Maynard believes in Blanche, and she in him, as at that hour when she saw him lifted

in the arms of big-bearded men, and carried on board the Cunard steamer !

That proud triumph over the people has made an impression upon her heart, never to be effaced !

And to win such a wife, *who would not be true to the people?*

THE END.











